https://doi.org/10.15388/vu.thesis.775
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KLAIPEDA UNIVERSITY
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The Conceptual Development of Higher Education Internationalisation in (Eastern) Europe from 1990 to 2020: the case of Lithuania and Estonia

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Social Sciences,
Education (S 007)

VILNIUS 2025

The dissertation was prepared between 2018 and 2024 at Vilnius University. The research was supported by the Utrecht Network Young Researchers' Grant.
The dissertation is defended on an external basis.

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VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS
KLAIPĖDOS UNIVERSITETAS
MYKOLO ROMERIO UNIVERSITETAS

Monika Orechova

Aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo koncepto raida (rytų) Europoje 1990–2020 metais: Lietuvos ir Estijos atvejis

DAKTARO DISERTACIJA

Socialiniai mokslai,
edukologija (S 007)

VILNIUS 2025

Disertacija rengta 2018–2024 metais Vilniaus universitete.
Mokslinius tyrimus rėmė Utrechto tinklo Jaunųjų mokslininkų stipendijų programa.

Disertacija ginama eksternu.

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Disertacija ginama viešame Gynimo tarybos posėdyje 2025 m. birželio mėn. 25 d. 13 val. Vilniaus universiteto Filosofijos fakulteto 201 auditorijoje. Adresas: Universiteto g. 9/1, 201 aud., Vilnius, Lietuva, tel. nr. +370 5 266 7600; el. paštas monika.orechova@fsf.vu.lt

Disertaciją galima peržiūrėti Klaipėdos universiteto, Mykolo Romerio universiteto, Vilniaus universiteto bibliotekose ir VU interneto svetainėje adresu: *https://www.vu.lt/naujienos/ivykiu-kalendorius*

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FOREWORD

if I am not being killed
do I have the right
to talk with those who are being killed
as an equal

- Iryna Shuvalova, translated from Ukrainian by Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps, May 2022

According to the traditional academic writing canon, this is quite a radical start to a PhD thesis. Especially, considering that the topic of said thesis is merely internationalisation of higher education which is, generally, not a violent affair. And yet, to begin it any other way seems disingenuous to me. I do not presume to leave my personhood at the door of an academic institution or shed it as an outer skin before I take up a research endeavour. I do not imagine myself to be a detached analyst who is void of any prior experience, attitude or conviction. I am not; and I carry all this into my research as much as I carry it with me everywhere I go. The majority of this thesis was written during the full-scale Russian invasion into Ukraine which commenced on February 24, 2022. While I was typing the words you are about to read, members of the Ukrainian armed forces were fighting and dying for their freedom; in high probability, also for yours. Definitely, for mine.

Throughout the four years initially allocated to my PhD research, almost 2 passed amidst a global pandemic and then, there was a war. The thesis you are about to read has been reinvented several times during its production. In all its iterations, the main question remained the same, though, no less elusive – what is it exactly that we are doing here? What do we mean by 'internationalisation', what does it entail, what do we do about it? What do we say and what is actually happening? Are we aware of how we are constructing both ourselves and internationalisation as we speak? Do we care and should we? Who is we and is there anything about us and internationalisation together that is peculiar? What do we do with internationalisation and what do we believe it to be doing with us? It was a winding road, full of avenues not taken. Some of them were abandoned out of necessity, others proved to be insufficient to answer the questions listed above. But let us start at the beginning.

I first came to internationalisation research as a practitioner. The question I had was rather straightforward (even if not the most 'scientific') – how do we make internationalisation work? It came out of years of observation in my university. Some departments would work incessantly to ensure that their students get the most international experience; in others, it seemed as if nobody cared. This lack of consistency puzzled me while internationalisation became one of the buzzwords of higher education in my country and my part of Europe. Everybody was talking about it, yet, it seemed almost ephemeral when it came to implementation. At first, I felt as if there was supposed to be some key, a magic formula, that would allow us to actually bring internationalisation (a shorter name, maybe?) to the forefront of our actions. I endeavoured to find this key in my research. In retrospect, that seems a particularly naïve aspiration.

As I started working on it, I was astounded by the amount of research that had already been done on the subject. Most of it was conducted in countries of the Global West whose experience of the 20th century was vastly different than mine. When collecting data for my first article on how internationalisation is understood in Central and Eastern European research community (in 2019), I managed to find less than 20 internationally published papers that discussed internationalisation in the region. It was a clear indication of the conclusion that Central and Eastern Europe remains one of the most underrepresented regions in internationalisation research (Bedenlier et al., 2018; Kuzhabekova et al., 2015). To a large extent, this current situation is a direct consequence of the events of the second half of the 20th century. What follows is a brief overview of the past several decades in terms of higher education development in Lithuania. A more elaborate analysis of this period in the newly independent Estonia and Lithuania is provided in Chapter 3 of the thesis.

History

I have personally lived through, arguably, one of the most interesting historical periods of the region. Me and my peers are still called the 'generation of Independence' as we were born right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. We are both a little over 30 now, me and my country in its newest iteration. That is also the age of our higher education research. While all education was ideological in the Soviet Union, research in physics, biochemistry and other industry related fields still thrived as much as anything could thrive in the Soviet Union. Social sciences and humanities, on the other hand, could only be researched from the Marxist-Leninist point of view. Research in these areas, therefore, stalled. Higher education research was almost non-existent. Internationalisation (internacionalizacija in Lithuanian, as it was called at the time) was the word used to describe policies that modern day historians refer to as Russification or Sovietization (Grybkauskas, 2013). International cooperation between the Soviet republics was encouraged via the notion of 'Friendship of Nations' which focused on national ethnic and cultural aspects as a way to build international communism. Traveling outside of the 'Iron Curtain' was virtually impossible.

As Lithuania regained independence in 1991, we had to play catch-up to all the science and progress that had been happening in 'the West'. The higher education sector underwent multiple reforms and the politicians aspired to bring in 'Western' investors and experts to help us. The main goal for the first decade was to join NATO and the European Union and, thus, the European Commission became the main financial and political driver of internationalisation in education. To this day, the European Commission and other EU institutions remain an important player in the international dimension of higher education. They provide funding and set out strategic expectations in its agenda for a competitive European higher education.

This is a story that rings true to many people across what is now often called Central and Eastern Europe and was (sometimes, still is) for quite some time called post-Soviet in a peculiar subversion of history over geography, in countries like Estonia, Poland, Czechia, Slovenia, and others. While we may have gone about it slightly differently, all of us shared an aspiration to 'catch up to the West'. We had similar education reforms in similarly unquestioning ways and have striven to make ourselves relevant by following the guidelines that were provided to us. Historical issues notwithstanding, international education research is a fickle matter. Education is immensely contextual and has a symbiotic relationship with the society that it serves, regardless of the size of that society. As education researchers in Central and Eastern Europe tried to enter the conversation, they struggled to be relevant and interesting to those who have already been everywhere and done everything that they were doing at the time. Once the results of the 'Western' reforms have been researched, there was not much that CEE could offer that 'the West' has not already done.

Changes

Initially, my research design included fieldwork in at least three Central and Eastern European countries. I had learned that university faculty was the first line of offense and their involvement was crucial for any international endeavour in higher education to succeed. Therefore, the plan was to come to a university, meet the academic staff, have interviews and focus groups with them, observe and try to decipher what were they key factors that got them involved in internationalisation. I had planned my first visit to happen in May of 2020. As we now all know, that was not to happen. The vast majority of European countries were in various forms of lock-down and universities stood empty with classes moved to online learning platforms.

I would like to say now that I immediately knew what to do and re-designed my research to meet these unexpected circumstances. That would be a blatant lie. I spent three weeks cleaning my apartment in an attempt to bring some order to a situation that was entirely out of my control. National borders were being closed and the grand vision of limitless European mobility met the harsh reality of government leaders trying to do something that would give them some semblance of control. I could not really fault them; our coping mechanisms were not very different after all. If we were to understand internationalisation of higher education as international exchange, it seemed as if it was gone for good. This further highlighted the question of the concept of internationalisation itself and brought it to the forefront of my research.

As a linguist, I am well aware that words have meanings that shift in time and space. However, the multitude of internationalisations I had observed in my research and practice seemed to be in contrast with the one definition that was being referred to most often. It also eluded a relatively closed set of meanings, even in the limits of one university; it looked as if everyone had their own understanding of internationalisation. But if we all have a different understanding of it, what can we expect of the various attempts to frame it as a shared objective?

Connections

To be honest, I could not figure it out. The more I looked at the data I had collected at the time, the more I thought about it, the more incomprehensible it seemed. I felt as if I was trying to solve a puzzle but every fifth piece was missing; as if I knew there was something beneath the surface but I just could not reach it. I could not find the key to unlock that surface layer and look deeper. It was frustrating beyond measure. All of this, of course, was not happening in a vacuum. By the end of 2021, the Russian army was located at the Ukrainian borders. I was still trying to figure out internationalisation in Lithuania and Estonia.

The corner of my bedroom that doubles as my office overlooks a busy street in a residential neighbourhood. The high-rise apartment buildings I can see outside the window look almost exactly the same as those the Russians dropped bombs on in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. What does this have to do with internationalisation? Not much, maybe. But also, everything. In the early morning of the 24th, in the first hours of the war, I caught myself thinking about internationalisation and the lofty ideals of global peace somewhat vaguely tied to it. As I stood looking at the buildings outside of my window, intact (so far) but almost shivering in the white and bleak February cold, I could hardly believe the naivety. ‘Fat lot of help internationalisation has done here', I thought. I was angry, and disappointed, and a little lost and a lot afraid.

I followed through with a study visit to Bologna in May and was fuming every time I heard the word *pace* (peace in English). Where I come from, the generation of my grandparents know all too well what a Russian peace looks like and would not wish it upon anyone. The disconnect I had felt sometimes in conversations with "Westerners" turned into a chasm; it seemed as if we inhabited different worlds and there was hardly any way to bridge them. Often, people from Eastern Europe are aware of this distinction. But me, I am one of the new ones; fluent in English and all the appropriate Western cultural references. I have the audacity of equality.

I came back and took a year of academic leave. In August of the same year, I went to the Concepta summer school in Helsinki and spent two weeks immersed in Conceptual History. Reinhart Koselleck was a soldier in the World War II and then a prisoner of war of the Soviet army; in his theory, he discusses repetitive structures in history, a kind of rhythmic understanding of time. On my daily metro trips, I would catch myself thinking: maybe history does not repeat itself; maybe, we repeat history because we (what is the we in this case? where is it located?) understand only the past but both the present and the future remain elusive. Admittedly, I spent too much time thinking about temporality but I was also preoccupied with space. Koselleck uses a lot of spatial metaphors to analyse time, and I was interested in space because I had finally seen its peculiarity, its unnaturalness, its non-neutrality. I understood that space, although so often considered natural, can be (and in my case, was) political.

Up to that point, I had only considered internationalisation from inside Eastern Europe, namely, how higher education internationalisation is conceptualised in Estonia and Lithuania? Thinking about space, though, made me question that space. It led to inquiries into how the conceptual cluster of Central and Eastern Europe came to be in the post-1990 academic landscape and then, further, what was happening with internationalisation at the time? None of these processes were happening separately, so, why not look at them simultaneously? That was the key I was looking for. Originally, I had set out to research higher education internationalisation. It turns out, I had been looking at the wrong thing all along. In this case, internationalisation is a mirror. What we see in the mirror is us.

INTRODUCTION

The rationale

Since internationalisation is a highly practical and applicable research object with a rather self-explanatory name, its conceptual underpinnings are rarely addressed in the scientific community. According to Bedenlier et al. (2018), there are two major strands in the current research of internationalisation (from 1998 to 2018). The first includes the managerial aspects of internationalisation inside the institution such as quality, strategic development and the curriculum. The second strand focuses on the perspectives and experiences of those involved in internationalisation, their needs, support structures and negotiation of identity. The authors also note that internationalisation research so far has been largely Anglo-Saxon and Western-Europe driven (Bedenlier et al., 2018). Among the limited number of studies pertaining to Central and Eastern Europe, the trends mentioned above are also observed and the concept of internationalisation is not discussed in much detail (Orechova, 2021).

Internationalisation research has been around for several decades now and the scientific as well as practical understanding of it has developed accordingly. Yet, as early as in 2011, Jane Knight questioned whether internationalisation has become a catch-all word than can be used to describe anything and everything related to an international or intercultural dimension in higher education (Knight, 2011). Moreover, the current definition and understanding of what internationalisation is, comes from the Western world, the social, political and historical circumstances of which are different than those of Eastern Europe (Bedenlier et al., 2018). The re-considering of what internationalisation means for this particular section of the world, therefore, can be considered a demonstration of agency and an attempt to disrupt the uneven distribution of power (Whitsed & Green, 2014) when it comes to both internationalisation and knowledge at large. The lessons that we learn here may also be beneficial to other ‘peripheral’ higher education areas in South America, Africa or Asia.

The approach

Conventional research objects dictate somewhat conventional methods. However, a concept is quite an unconventional object which demands a less conventional research design. A straightforward content-analysis of internationalisation strategies, for instance, would only be capable of showing a limited picture of what people and institutions say they want to do rather than what they actually do or think and, crucially, what real-life implications it has. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, tackles deeper levels of understanding when we look at the text. As we can never know what someone actually wants to say, we can only analyse what possible meanings can be taken up by those hearing or reading those specific words. These meanings do not exist in a vacuum. Every utterance is created by a multitude of choices which are greatly influenced by the society we live in. There are many ways to analyse discourse and while critical discourse studies are itself comprised of various approaches, not all discourse studies are necessarily critical. To me, critical paradigms were a prudent choice that allowed to incorporate my prior experiences and observations of internationalisation into a robust theoretical architecture.

However, the focus on the concept of internationalisation still demanded a more targeted approach than Critical Discourse Studies could offer. In a lucky coincident, I was introduced to Conceptual History (*Begriffsgeschichte*) in an online course for political studies researchers on Critical Discourse Studies led by Michał Krzyżanowski in the summer of 2020. He also introduced the branch of Discourse conceptual analysis (DCA) which emerged from the Discourse-Historical Approach of Critical Discourse Studies as a response to the increasingly conceptual nature of discourse and the necessity of new tools for its robust analysis (Krzyżanowski, 2016). In DCA, the Discourse-Historical Approach of Critical Discourse Studies is joined with the historiographic theory of Conceptual History in order to investigate the construction and development of particular concepts present in the discourse. While I do not consider this research to be a discourse-conceptual analysis as such, it is definitely very much inspired by DCA. Both Critical Discourse Studies and Conceptual History serve as the theoretical foundation of this study (more on this in Chapter 1) and, methodologically, the aim is to systematically combine the two (more on this in Chapter 4).

The area

Both Critical Discourse Studies and Conceptual History emphasize the role of context, therefore, as much as I would have liked (and initially set out) to analyse multiple cases in Central and Eastern Europe, both of these approaches (and the limits of a single human-being-led research) demanded a more limited area of interest. The initial choice of 6 countries in the broader region of Central and Eastern Europe were, thus, narrowed down to two Baltic States, Lithuania and Estonia. Both Lithuania and Estonia were occupied by the Soviet Union and were incorporated into it until early 1990s when they played an active part in the Union's collapse and regained statehood and independence after half a century of occupation. The next steps included the 'Western reforms' and aspirations to join NATO and the EU which were fulfilled in the first decade of the 20th century. In terms of higher education, neoliberal reforms, marketization, inclusion into the European Higher Education Area and internationalisation followed.

The aim

In this study, I aim to investigate the concept of higher education internationalisation in Eastern Europe (Lithuania and Estonia) in terms of its historical development and its implications. The study is conducted in an abductive manner and departs from the following hypotheses formulated during the initial stages of research:

1) internationalisation in Eastern Europe is a borrowed concept: on one hand, it has been used in the USSR but had a different conceptual load; on the other, it came from 'the West' with the education reforms and expectations of the 1990s;
2) internationalisation is a neoliberal operationalising concept which was introduced to the region during the 'transformation period' together with the push of economic reforms and, thus, was imbued with an economic logic further strengthened by the neoliberal education reforms of the 2000s;
3) internationalisation is a temporal future-oriented concept which is used to legitimise policy goals and operationalise higher education discourses (e.g., quality);
4) internationalisation is a tool that Eastern European universities use to bring themselves closer to 'the West' conceptualised as the norm, from 'the East' conceptualised as the other.

Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis mostly follows general conventions but the main guiding idea is to introduce new topics and new findings in a consequential manner, so that the preceding chapters provide substantial basis for the ideas discussed in the next ones. In the first part, I present the theoretical backgrounds and constructs which form the basis of my research. The notions of a concept, discourse, text, context and recontextualisation are elaborated on in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 provides a broader conceptual context in presenting the global development of internationalisation and internationalisation research. Chapter 3 further engages with the context which informs the conceptual and discursive analysis, including the concept of Eastern Europe, focusing on the important period of the 1990s and the development of higher education in Lithuania and Estonia since.

The second part of the thesis begins with Chapter 4, in which I elaborate on the research process and explain the methodological framework, providing details on the steps of the analysis conducted. In Chapter 5, the findings of the study are presented as an elaboration on several semantic fields constructed on the basis of data from 1990 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2020. Chapter 6 discusses the findings with reference to theory and prior research with a particular focus on the hypotheses stated above. The final section is the conclusions of the research followed by a summary in Lithuanian.

I believe it prudent to disclaim here that it is highly probable that I do not provide a magical formula or a key to 'make a university international'. Hopefully, my findings encourage discussions among and outside Eastern European universities and provide basis for further interrogations of what it is that we talk about when we think about internationalisation. In an attempt to temper your expectations (and by extension, mine), this thesis is not exactly about internationalisation in Eastern Europe but rather about the state we find ourselves in with regards to internationalisation. The goal here is not to explain the peculiarities of how we internationalise but rather how we conceptualise what internationalisation *is*. The text below invites you on a journey through time and space, and the process of change, both in the way we speak and the way we think.

1. THEORY AND METHOD

The following chapter is intended to familiarise the reader with the main theoretical notions that guide the empirical research of this study – concept and discourse. While both can sound self-explanatory, as it often happens with commonly used words, the specifics are crucial in order to elucidate the later findings of the research. The title ‘Theory and method’ refers to both ontological and epistemological underpinnings of my study. That is, the way I understand ‘concept’ and ‘discourse’ has a fundamental impact on how these are applied in the process of analysis and the construction of the process of analysis itself. In the methodology chapter further on, I will describe in detail the precise practical steps I took to conduct this research. In the following chapter, however, I aim to elucidate the thinking process that led to this analysis having been conducted the way it was.

At the core of this research is language and its use. Use of language implies a renegotiation of power – this is something we have learned from Critical Discourse Studies. When considered from a social point of view, language has the potential and, indeed, an inevitability to shape the social reality as well as be shaped by it. This process is very noticeable when we consider change (linguistic or social) over time. As Reinhart Koselleck notes, “every language is historically conditioned, and every history is conditioned by language (…) all our concrete experiences only first become experiences by being mediated through language” (Koselleck, 2018, p. 138).

The theoretical approach to the analysis presented in this thesis, thus, is fundamentally a merging of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and Conceptual History (CH), akin to the Discourse Conceptual Analysis. The two approaches are somewhat methodologically close as they use primarily linguistic data to elaborate on social or conceptual change over space and time. Proponents of both approaches have noted the affinity of the two. According to Michal Krzyżanowski, due to the increasingly conceptual nature of discourse, introduction of certain notions central to CH provide CDS the necessary tools for analysis of discourses dominated by concepts (Krzyżanowski, 2016). On the other side, Jan Ifversen, for example, has elaborated on the conceptual architecture of discourse which refers to the observation that discourses are organised around concepts with a particular concept serving as a nodal point around which the discourse is structured (Ifversen, 2011). The following chapter will elucidate on the specific notions, tensions and meeting points which allow both Conceptual History and Critical Discourse Studies to serve as the theoretical foundation of this study.

1.1. Concepts and Conceptual History

Whenever people hear the phrase ‘the concept of internationalisation’, it is usually the second part that needs to be elaborated on. And yet, the first also merits an elaborate discussion. In this study, I follow the notion of concept as “a concentrate of several substantial meanings” (Koselleck, 2004, p. 85) from the study of Conceptual History (*Begriffsgeschichte*) which can be placed in the broader paradigm of social constructivism (Ifversen, 2011). Conceptual History is primarily concerned with conceptual change which is reflected in the shifts of the multitude of meanings that are contained in a concept. These shifts are only available if language in use is considered. What differentiates a concept from a word is, therefore, its ability to get involved in action that stems from a certain situation or context (Ifversen, 2011). In the following section, I will discuss the notions and ideas of historical temporality which underpin Conceptual History and its understanding of concepts, their internal and external structure, and the role of concepts as sociopolitical structuring agents.

1.1.1. Concepts and words: semantics

As we delve into the formation of the concept of internationalisation in a specific regional context, ‘concept’ is the primary heuristic device and a focal point of the analysis. While it is quite obvious that words and concepts are not identical, their precise distinctions sometimes remain elusive. In simple terms, the obvious difference between a word and a concept is the number of meanings it encompasses; however, a word may also carry different meanings in different contexts. The fundamental semantic difference emerges when not only the quantitative but also a qualitative dimension of these meanings is considered. A word can only mean one thing in a given context; that is, its meaning can change with the context but one word will still refer to a single meaning in that particular context. A concept, on the other hand, is a concentrate of meanings. As Reinhart Koselleck put it, “A word presents potentialities for meaning; a concept unites within itself a plenitude of meaning” (Koselleck, 2004, p. 85). In other words, while we can use words (semiotic signifiers) to refer to phenomena (referents), we can only use concepts to describe a historical reality and historical experience which is condensed in the concept: “a word becomes a concept only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a sociopolitical context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word” (ibid).

A helpful semantic explanation is provided by Jan Ifversen who differentiates between the representational and referential aspect of conceptual meaning. The former pertains to the relation between the word and the concept, and the latter, to the relation between the concept and the object, both of which are of interest to conceptual historians. The representational aspect denotes how concepts are expressed in words and how their meanings are structured (Ifversen, 2011). The referential aspect is important in as much as it provides information on the role a chosen concept plays in a given context. As opposed to the linguistic point of view, where reference needs to be studied within language, in Conceptual History, this reference pertains to extra-linguistic context. A conceptual historian is primarily interested in what possibilities and constraints are enforced by the context upon the language use, that is, what choices are available to social actors who choose to bring the concept into use (Ifversen, 2011). The two aspects of conceptual meaning are crucial to the analysis as they complement each other in the sense that concepts are expressed via particular words but their expression is limited by what is available, in other words, sayable in a given situation.

While conceptual history is strongly influenced by the linguistic turn, it is important to note that 'concept' here is not a linguistic term. General linguistics, largely and by definition, see language as a neutral area. Conceptual historians, on the other hand, see language as a scene for political action and, thus, concepts as drivers of such action (Ifversen, 2021). According to Koselleck, shared concepts are the basis of modern society: "without common concepts there is no society, and above all, no political field of action" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 76). This is also a linkage with Critical Discourse Studies which consider discourse and society mutually constitutive (Wodak, 2008). Therefore, language plays a crucial role in both the development and the analysis of concepts. Koselleck maintained that conceived historically, language was always self-reflective. That is, epistemologically, language refers to the extralinguistic (events) and to itself at the same time (Koselleck, 2002). Experiences which constitute the concept are, therefore, linguistically stored in it and the linguistic context regulates the range of its semantic content (ibid), hence, the linguistic expression determines the scope of meanings that are available for the uptake.

This is, of course, true in both words and concepts since their common historical quality stems from their ambiguity. Meanings for words and concepts are attached to the word but their comprehension also relies on their context and historical situation. The difference between the two lies in the word's ability to lose its ambiguity when it is used. A concept, however, is always ambiguous (Koselleck, 2004). Whereas words intend to define, to delineate, concepts, on the opposite, tend to intertwine with other concepts and share ideational elements with them, pointing to the porousness of their boundaries (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017).

1.1.2. Concepts and time: temporality

It can be argued that Koselleck viewed conceptual history as a groundwork for a theory of historical times. In what is often considered his theory of modernity, Koselleck maintained that in the age of enlightenment, revolution and industrialization (between the 1760s and the 1840s, a period he designated as the 'saddle period' (*Sattelzeit* in German)) the notions of time, history and future had fundamentally changed. In *Sattelzeit*, European modernity emerged as a self-reflexive way of conceptualizing historical time (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). According to Koselleck, "all these new concepts became situated within a temporal process that at every stage both registered historical change and gave meaning to it" (Koselleck, 2011, p. 13), that is, understanding and conceptualization were now taking place simultaneously. Another facet of the modern times that Koselleck discussed was the proliferation of temporal concepts (for instance, progress) and temporalization of concepts themselves. He argued that modern concepts increasingly appeared in discourse as 'entimed' concepts. Concepts could be associated with past, present or future. These temporal markers carried normative values as it was a bygone past, a transient present or an ideal future (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). This temporalization of history itself, according to Koselleck (2004), was leading towards a peculiar acceleration of historical time which resulted in a number of movement concepts which replaced or coexisted with prior static concepts. In many European languages this was possible by merely adding the suffix '-ization', converting, for example, 'democracy' into 'democratization'; the concept was thus transformed from a fixed form into an ongoing process or a future task (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017).

In order to explicate this temporalization in terms of historical time itself, Koselleck introduced the notions 'space of experience' and 'horizon of expectation' as metahistorical categories indicative of the temporality of history. Space of experience connects the present to the past, and horizon of expectation, the present to the future (Koselleck, 2004). In studying concepts, the space of experience can be understood as a complete context, the totality of all available (past) experiences related to the concept (Ifversen, 2011). The horizon of expectation, on the other hand, refers to (future) possible experiences that can potentially happen in relation to the concept (Koselleck, 2004). In the modern age, Koselleck claims, the future implies things which can no longer be fully derived from previous experience. In opposition to an earlier understanding of historical time, we are now unable to determine what the future holds based on our previous experience because "time continually seems to overtake itself" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 113). This is, in effect, the result of the historical acceleration mentioned above – "the shortening of the time spans necessary for gaining new experiences" (p. 113).

According to Koselleck, after the 19th century, the balance between experience and expectation in political and social concepts fundamentally shifted. Prior to the Enlightenment, these concepts primarily served to collect experiences. In modern times, however, new concepts such as, for instance, democratism, liberalism, socialism, did not have a space of experience to refer to as they were meant to open up a new future. This led to concepts being built on expectations rather than experience as "the lower their content in terms of experience, the greater were the expectations they created" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 129). In this way, political and social concepts no longer record given facts but rather "become factors in the formation of consciousness and the control of behavior" (ibid).

Helge Jordheim (2012) argues that Koselleck's theory of modernity is encompassed by a metatheory of historical times which grew out of his work with the relationship between language and history. The core of this theory is the intention to "replace the idea of linear, homogeneous time with a more complex, heterogeneous, and multilayered notion of temporality" (p. 151) which can be observed in the internal temporal structure of concepts as well. In his essay Time and History, Koselleck uses examples of historical determinations located at different temporal levels from Frederick the Great, Kant and Goethe to illustrate different aspects of historical reality. Frederick understands history as following certain time structures which encompass sequences that appear in response to other pre-given situations (Koselleck (2002) calls these sequences "history's recurring possibilities" (p. 113)); Kant provides moral reasoning for the future to be different from the past, and Goethe's observation on the shortening of the spans of experience caused by the industrial world leads to the assertion that convention-based inferences for the future are limited. All of these, according to Koselleck, have been right in their own temporal context and can be combined into a shared historical reality which means that "it is only meaningful to speak of historical times in the plural" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 113–114). This also means that the processes of temporalization and acceleration include history itself which shifts from a static homogeneous space into an indefinite and unstoppable process (or movement); all intentions, actions and historical objects are subjected to it (Jordheim, 2012).

1.1.3. Concepts and language: history

For Koselleck, language is a crucial element in history. If anything happens beyond one's experience, it is something that can only be experienced through language: "as soon as an event has become past, language becomes the primary fact without which no recollection and no scientific disposition is possible" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 27). Language is, therefore, always linked to experience and human experiences are invested with temporal structures. Human understanding of time is effectively structured around experiences and expectations in the sense that we refer to what we already experienced as past and what we expect to happen, the future. The gap in between is our present (Koselleck, 2002). Since both our experiences and expectations are linguistically mediated, that is, conceived through language, this is how time enters language and, subsequently, concepts, imbuing them with their internal temporality discussed above. However, there is a gap between language and time as there is between language and history: even though language is the only way to store and transmit past experiences (events), it is not equal to them. These events are, rather, linguistically mediated. Therefore, time works differently in terms of language and in terms of history. This effectively results in the fact that changes in a concept and the historical reality it refers to can occur in four different ways: 1) both remain unchanged, 2) both change simultaneously, 3) historical reality changes but the concept remains the same; 4) the concept changes but the historical reality it refers to remains unchanged (that is, it is not conceptualized in a different way) (Jordheim, 2012).

What underscores the porousness of the internal structure and the ambiguity of concepts is that they are located in complex semantic fields wherein they inform and shape each other. Therefore, when concepts change and we observe a conceptual shift, it is not a single undifferentiated mass transforming into another single undifferentiated mass. The identification of the combining parts of a concept and the fluctuations in the adjacent and interdependent concepts falls upon Conceptual History as well (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). Koselleck's understanding of concepts stems directly from his understanding of temporality and, when it comes to key or basic concepts, modernity. In essence, a concept consists not only of the multitude of meanings but also of the historical reality, or rather, the multitude of historical realities which exist in relation to the concept (Jordheim, 2012).

When a concept is used, experiences of that concept "which have a long-term effect and which have entered into the concept at and as its foundation, are linguistically stored in it" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 37) are also invoked. Due to this, conceptual history includes both synchronic and diachronic elements of the concept in what Koselleck refers to the as "the systematic claim of a historical concept" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 256). Since conceptual meanings cannot be chronologically listed but rather co-exist, overlap or even oppose one another, their internal synchronic structure is multilayered. This multilayered synchronic structure informs and aggregates into the diachronic development of the concept. The diachronic element, however, is also present within the concept as a representation of the multi-level structure of historical time which encompasses past, present and future. The systematic claim unfolds (and, thus, informs and regulates the concept) in diachronic time (Jordheim, 2012). Synchronically, the linguistic context regulates the range of a concept's semantic content (Koselleck, 2002).

Conceptual change, therefore, does not entail merely a semantic change from one meaning to another. Since the change occurs inside the complex of meanings (which are historically conditioned and interact with each other) contained within a concept, the history of a concept is multilayered and multilevel (Koselleck, 2011). All social and political concepts have their own multilayered and complex internal temporal structure which includes the three dimensions of the past. Although they all belong to a particular context, they are also inherently comprised of a pragmatic and polemic element which intervenes in the present, a prognostic element which anticipates the future and an element of duration which survives from the past (Jordheim, 2012). This intralinguistic temporality provides the basis for the thesis of "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous" which is prominent in Koselleckian Conceptual History. It is precisely this three-leveled temporal structure that explains why both synchronic and diachronic analysis is necessary to interrogate concepts. Since "every concept emerges under the temporal conditions of simultaneity, exemplified in speech acts, discursive relations, or rhetorical moves, [it] can be the object of synchronic analysis" (Jordheim, 2012, p. 169). However, since concepts are also comprised of elements that do not originate within those same temporal conditions but are rather sediments from the past or prefigurations of the future, the analysis must also include these non-synchronous (or non-simultaneous) facets. The inter-linkage of these diachronic and synchronic elements results in a historical depth of concepts which is not chronologically reflected in the linguistic space they inhabit (Jordheim, 2012). In sum, concepts have both extralinguistic temporality which is their temporal context and also an intralinguistic temporality which refers to the different temporal layers unfolding in their internal structure.

1.1.4. Concepts and society: action

> Concepts can be seen as focal points of interpretation and understanding; as identifying regularities and differences in human discourse; as windows through which we can appreciate how comprehensions of the world are organized and brought to bear on action; as milestones in the changing course of the evolution of knowledge; as constraints on the messiness of human thought and enablers of its transformation; and as rational and emotional containers of social logic and imagination. (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017, p. 2)

Koselleckian Conceptual History is primarily concerned with social and political concepts. Koselleck maintained that common concepts are the main constructing force behind society and, especially, any political field of action. Conversely, concepts themselves are founded in sociopolitical systems rather than mere linguistic communities (Koselleck, 2004). Accordingly, modern concepts due to their temporal-structural orientation towards expectation rather than experience "become the navigational instruments of the changing movement of history" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 129). In this way, concepts no longer merely indicate or record facts but also become factors of change capable of exerting influence on consciousness and behaviour (ibid). Furthermore, concepts work as limiting factors of what is sayable or, indeed, thinkable in a particular situation as "each concept establishes a particular horizon for potential experience and conceivable theory, and in this way sets a limit" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 86).

Moreover, the reversed relationship between a modern concept and what is conceived made concepts dependent on linguistic anticipations intended to shape the future. This led to a rise in concepts which could retain their political and social significance regardless of the fact that what they pointed to was beyond empirical verification. The focus on expectation allowed the concepts to become emotively charged and led to increasingly abstract concepts which required additional markers to differentiate. Such modern concepts were, thus, easily incorporated into ideologies (Koselleck, 2011). Political studies now recognize that clusters of political concepts constitute ideologies. In addition to these macro-arrangements of varying fluidity and flexibility, conceptual micro-arrangements also underpin and map understandings that may be peculiar to certain societies but not to others. This is a reflection of the complex internal structure of a concept as discussed above. The systematic claim of a concept – the range of its various interpretations available in different temporal and spatial frames – can only be described as a variety of potentially mutually incompatible components (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). That is not incidental because in reference to historical experience, concepts function to include as much as semantically possible rather than to define and control them (Jordheim, 2012).

In actual language use, however, concepts are always employed selectively whether purposefully or accidentally. As all concepts are ambiguous, their use does not generate a totality of meanings but rather a set of specific meanings which are called upon in a specific situation which effectively builds disagreement over the connotations of these meanings into all social and political concepts (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). In Conceptual History, therefore, concepts are considered according to their sociopolitical and not linguistic function (Koselleck, 2011). Moreover, their existence is predicated on the sociopolitical rather than the language itself. The emergence of a concept is also, therefore, a sociopolitical and not a linguistic process: "a word becomes a concept when a single word is needed that contains – and is indispensable for articulating – the full range of meanings derived from a given sociopolitical context" (Koselleck, 2011, p. 19). Moreover, the necessity of a concept is action-based – a concept emerges due to its involvement in a particular situation or context: [a word] "is made into concept by speaking and writing actors" (Ifversen, 2011, p. 74).

Koselleck's seminal work in Conceptual History *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Basic Concepts in History: A Historical Dictionary of Political and Social Language in Germany), co-edited with Werner Conze and Otto Bruner, published in eight volumes from 1972 to 1997) is a lexicon of what he deemed 'basic concepts' which designate situations at intersections of larger historical processes. Due to their complex and heavy conceptual load, basic concepts become emblematic of a political and social configuration to the extent that they become indispensable to any formulation of social or political action in a certain context (Ifversen, 2011). Structurally, basic concepts "express what a discourse is talking about" (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017, p. 2). In the theory of basic concepts, Koselleck combines a focus on language use (concepts become an indispensable element of social and political vocabulary via their use) with language theory (concepts are the focal points of discourse) (Ifversen, 2021).

In his interpretation of basic concepts, Ifversen proposed to name them 'key concepts' in reference to the fact that these concepts "play a key role in situations characterized by change and contestation" (Ifversen, 2011, p. 75), that is, they are primarily factors rather than indicators of change. Even though they retain their dual function, the balance is meaningfully shifted towards action rather than recording of facts. As Ifversen (2011) puts it, "Key concepts are those you need in order to access a particular field. Without the key you will either not understand or misunderstand what goes on. Key concepts (…) point to the semantic building blocks in a text or a discourse. (…) They make up the conceptual architecture of larger discursive and institutional frames, and they become forceful tools in speech acts and argumentative activities" (p. 87). Due to such conceptual behaviour, key concepts are nested in semantic fields and cannot be studied in isolation as its semantic field serves as meaning-constructing space for a key concept (ibid).

We have now discussed the basic premises of Koselleckian Conceptual History and the various aspects of concepts that are pertinent to further analysis of the concept of internationalisation in Eastern European higher education. The following section is dedicated to the second part of the theoretical background for this study, discourse, which, as we have already seen, is the space where conceptual development happens.

1.2. Discourse and Discourse Studies

If we were to look for the most common term to broadly refer to something that has to do with language, discourse would quite probably be on the top of that list. It is undeniably one of the terms that have moved from the scientific milieu to the vocabulary of the general population and, understandably, lost some of its nuance along the way. Thus, discourse is often understood as the entirety of statements that can be made on a particular topic. While this understanding may be sufficient for everyday use, that is not the case when interrogating discourse as a scientific category, which is the case in this study.

The focal point of this study is the understanding of discourse as not merely a linguistic but rather a social category. Herein, discourse refers not only to a linguistic representation of reality but also to a social reality that is described and, therefore, (re)constituted in a particular linguistic form. The study revolves around language and texts, yet, the object of analysis is not a linguistic one as such. In linguistics, 'discourse' refers to a linguistic unit larger than a sentence comprised of statements on a particular topic, a language-in-use (for an overview of the development of 'discourse' in linguistics, see Blommaert, 2005). In terms of power, it is neutral and, while, it denotes a language praxis (that is, language that is being used by its speakers), it does not necessarily concern itself with the social implications of language.

When we talk about discourse in social sciences, the category of power is crucial to the discussion. Michel Foucault's Discourse Theory posits that discourse is used to construct knowledge and, in effect, distribute power in society. This distribution of power is brought into reality via the control the powerful exert over language used by everyone (Foucault, 1972). The language we use, thus, influences, limits and, to an extent, controls how we think and conceptualise reality. It is nearly impossible to conceive of a notion that we cannot put into words.

Van Dijk maintains that the core of the various iterations of discourse studies is "the systematic and explicit analysis of the various structures and strategies of different levels of text and talk" (Van Dijk, 2007, p. xxvi). I use the term 'discourse studies' here rather than the somewhat more popular 'discourse analysis' in agreement with van Dijk (2007) who posited that the more appropriate choice is Discourse Studies and Critical Discourse Studies, owing to the fact that studies conducted under these labels do not merely employ a particular method (analysis) but also have their particular theoretical objectives. That is, 'discourse analysis' is not a method but rather an investigative approach which can employ various methods to analyse discourse.

A further distinction should also be made between discourse studies and critical discourse studies. As different ways to interrogate discourse were emerging in the scientific community in the 1960s and 1970s, frequent references were made to the 'Critical Theory' of the Frankfurt School. The studies themselves, however, maintained a detached relationship with the actual movements against social inequality. A notable exception was the nascent branch of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) which focused on power, domination and inequality and how these are unequally mirrored in language and text (Van Dijk, 2007). Still firmly rooted in linguistics and primarily studying texts, these studies were not interested in solving any linguistic issues – they were exclusively concerned with social problems. What differentiated CDS from more linguistic approaches to discourse (e.g., critical sociolinguistics) was its firm anchoring in social reality and orientation to actual problems in society (Blommaert, 2005).

1.2.1. Language and society: discourse

In his introduction to the book "Discourse. A Critical Introduction" (2005) Jan Blommaert conceptualizes discourse as 'language-in-society' with the intent to underscore the "intrinsic interrelatedness of language and society" (p. 16). In critical discourse studies this interrelatedness is viewed through the lens of social constructionism and discourse is perceived to be both "socially constituted and socially constitutive" (Wodak, 2009, p. 89). Our language reflects our social reality and simultaneously, the language we use shapes our social reality as an instrument of power distribution.

Over the years of CDS development, the balance of the two (reflection and shaping) has decisively shifted towards the latter. In a recent article Krzyżanowski and Forchtner (2016) refer to Critical Discourse Studies as "the key area of critical social studies" (p. 254) that investigates how discourse changes itself as well as how it controls and shapes contemporary society. While critical theory, interdisciplinarity and linguistics have remained central inspirations for CDS scholars, it is noteworthy that CDS is placed firmly within critical social studies (ibid) rather than the broader humanities research.

During the process of its development CDS was influenced by various turns in different scientific areas (the linguistic turn in social sciences and the somewhat parallel interest in language-in-use in linguistics, just to name the most prominent). Many practitioners of CDS had a background in linguistics but were conducting research in social sciences. These multiple influences and personal boundary-crossing endeavours have resulted in a diverse group of critical approaches to studying discourse, so much so that van Dijk (2007) calls Critical Discourse Studies a "vast cross-discipline with equally vast sub-disciplines" (p. xxxvii) or even a "trans-discipline" (p. xix).

This group of research approaches, perhaps most appropriately referred to as a school or a programme, has several shared principles but also diverges on many aspects of theory and its operationalisation. All of the approaches, classified as CDS, are problem-oriented and, therefore, interdisciplinary; they share an interest in deconstructing ideologies and power through systematic investigation of semiotic (that is, meaningful) data; CDS researchers strive to make their own position explicit and remain self-reflective in the research process (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). It is precisely these facets of CDS that differentiates it from other disciplines of discourse studies; additionally, CDS maintains that the relationship between language and society is that of mediation and not determination. This stems from CDS being epistemologically grounded in social constructionism: discourses are conceived of as a result of jointly constructed meanings. Because understanding, and meaning are developed in a group of people and not by every individual separately, these discourses are social constructs which have 'real-life' implications in the social structures, for example, as discrimination against certain groups of people (ibid).

Another distinctive feature shared by the various branches of CDS is the strict link between theories and concepts and analytical approaches that are employed in the study, a facet which oftentimes remained elusive to those attempting to engage with CDS. On one hand, theoretical thinkers failed to observe that the concept of discourse required a focus on language as an object of analysis. On the other, those interested in CDS as "just" a method habitually discarded the notion that CDS analyses are closely connected to their theoretical foundations and the perception of discourse as not only analytical but also a theoretical category (Krzyżanowski & Forchtner, 2016). There is a wide variety of theories that CDS researchers refer to. Possible choices range from theories on society and power (of M. Foucault and his followers) to theories of social cognition or functional grammar as well as individual concepts that are borrowed from other theoretical traditions. This variety notwithstanding, CDS implies "a circular and recursive-abductive relationship between theory and discourse" (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 14) as illustrated in the model for theoretical and methodological research procedures in Figure 1. This means that theory is both essential in formulating research questions which guide the collection, selection, analysis and interpretation of data, and is also "grounded in prior interpretations of empirical analyses" (ibid).

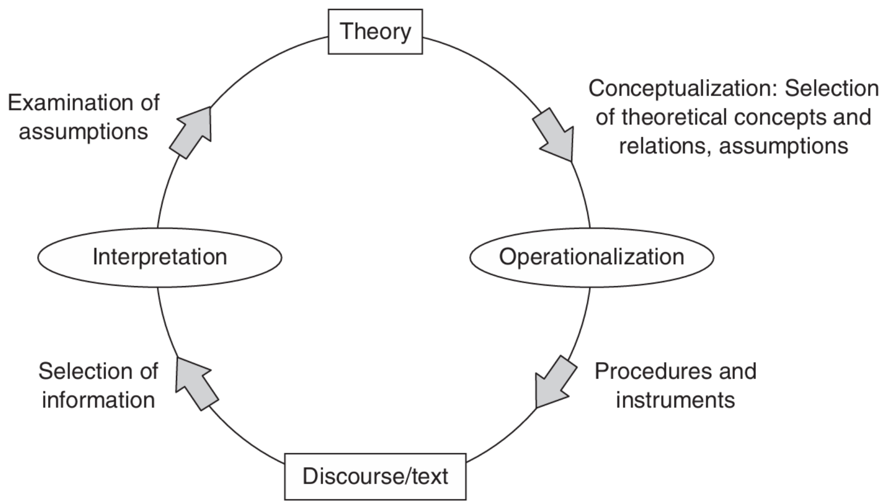

Figure 1. *Critical discourse studies as a circular process*

Note. Source: Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 14.

This linkage between theory and method can be observed in the different approaches of the Critical Discourse Studies school. Wodak and Meyer (2016) distinguish among the most prominent approaches (the list is by no means exclusive) according to the dichotomies of inductive vs. deductive perspective (Figure 2) and agency vs. structure (Figure 3). Authors note, however, that these are rough distinctions and any systematization of diverse approaches disregards the interconnectedness of some of them (ibid). In terms of induction vs. deduction, the choice of perspective is closely linked to the object of the study. The dialectic-relational approach and the sociocognitive approach are more deductively oriented, propose a closed theoretical framework and are more likely to illustrate their assumptions with several best-fit examples. The discourse-historical approach, the social actors approach and the dispositive analysis fall on the more inductive side of the spectrum, therefore, they tend to remain at the 'meso-level' and aim to discover new insights through detailed case-studies and comparatively large amount of data; the choice of the problem to investigate is, in such cases, based on personal preference and interest of the researcher(s) (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

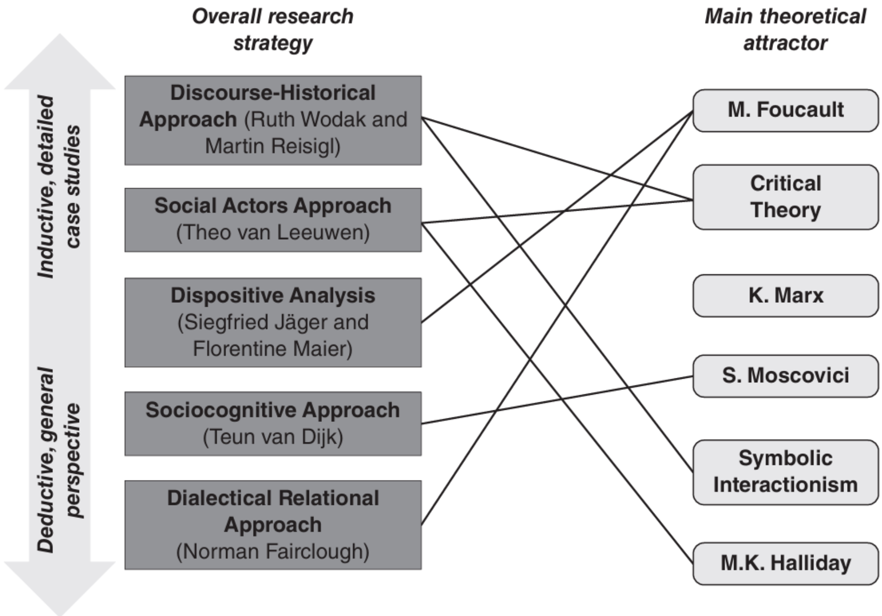

Figure 2. *Overall research strategies and theoretical background*

Note. Source: Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 18.

Another rough distinction can be made along the axis of (individual) agency vs. structure between more cognitive-sociopsychological approaches and more macro-sociological-structural approaches (Figure 3). These are determined by the level of social aggregation: whether the scholars focus their analysis on the way in which people mentally perceive or the way social structures determine the discourse. The closest to the opposite ends of this axis we find the Social Actors Approach (agency) and the Dialectical-Historical Approach (structure). Dispositive analysis is positioned in the middle and the Discourse-Historical Approach is approaching the middle line from the structural side while the Sociocognitive Approach is placed on the side of agency. The graph also demonstrates the level of linguistic operationalization present in different approaches. In the spectrum from broad linguistic operationalization to detailed linguistic operationalization the Dialectical Relational Approach is followed by the Sociocognitive Approach and Dispositive Analysis and then by the Social Actors Approach and the Discourse-Historical Approach (ibid).

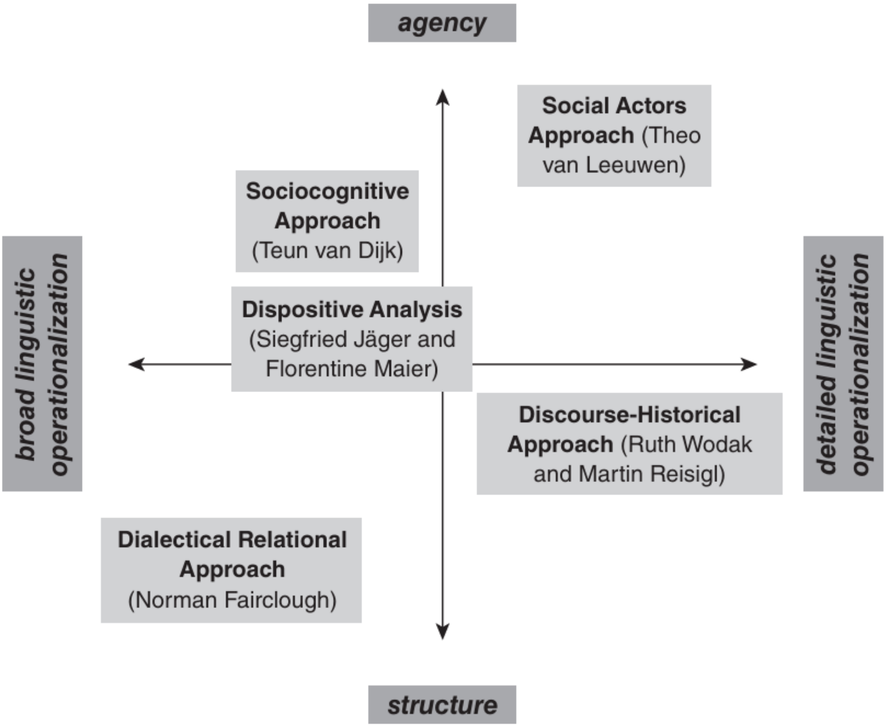

Figure 3. *Linguistic involvement and level of aggregation*

Note. Source: Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 20.

As the name implies the historical dimension of discourse is the most prominent in the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). According to Martin Reisigl (2017), the analytical framework of the Discourse-Historical Approach partly integrates Koselleckian Conceptual History as well as Hayden White's metahistorical approach. The main distinction in terms of the historicity of discourse in DHA is that the proponents of the approach convey all discourses as historically-conditioned and developed over long periods of time. More than other CDS approaches, the DHA considers the importance of historical subjects and historical anchoring as well as changes and repetitions of specific discourses (Reisigl, 2017).

In DHA, discourse is thus considered to be “a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action” which has a mutually constitutive relationship with the society, relates to a macro-topic and is linked to argumentation about validity claims involving several social actors with differing perspectives (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 27). The DHA also investigates intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between the objects of study (texts, genres, discourses) as well as extra-linguistic variables such as, for instance, the history of an organization or an institution. The purpose of this investigation is to “explore how discourses and texts change in relationship to sociopolitical change” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). In the following sub-section, we shall discuss the notions of ‘text’, ‘context’ and ‘recontextualization’ in order to elaborate on the analytical relationship between text and context which is crucial to a historically-engaged discourse analysis.

1.2.2. Text, context and recontextualization

Text

In her interpretation of Foucault’s definition of discourse, Ruth Wodak (2008) notes that discourse is “not an object but rather a set of relationships existing between discursive events” (p. 5). She further elaborates that this understanding then allows the analyst to identify these relationships between discursive events and to address the implications they have on historical change. Discourse, nonetheless, is perceived as “linguistic action”, performed by social actors in specific settings which are socially determined (ibid). A helpful distinction between discourse and text is provided by Jay Lemke (1995): “When we want to focus on the specifics of an event or occasion, we speak of the text; when we want to look at patterns, commonality, relationships that embrace different texts and occasions, we can speak of discourses” (p. 7ff, as cited in Wodak, 2008, p. 6). The crucial word here is ‘embrace’ because discourses encompass different texts into certain structures, implying commonalities of knowledge whereas a text is a realization of discourse (Wodak, 2008).

The primary criteria for text, that is, how we decide that something is a text, linguistically are conveyed through cohesion and coherence. The first refers to text-syntactic connections between the surface elements of text. Human languages follow a normative linear sequence which is determined by syntactic and grammatical regulations – adherence to these rules results in a cohesive text; in other words, the text makes sense. Linguistic coherence, on the other hand, refers to the semantic meaning of the text, in other words, the exact sense it makes. These are what we refer to as text-internal criteria (Wodak, 2008). In Critical Discourse Studies, the other five criteria of text, which are text-external play an essential role. These are intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. Intentionality refers to the purpose of text producers, that is, what is their intention with the text; acceptability mirrors intentionality as it refers to the extent to which the audience are to expect and understand the text, that is, to accept it; informativity is concerned with the quantity and quality (new or expected) information in the text; situationality refers to the speech situation in which the text was produced. Intertextuality refers to the fact that all texts relate to other texts synchronically as well as diachronically and this relation is how they achieve meaning. This is based on the assumption that every text is embedded in a context. According to Wodak (2008), cohesion and coherence are constitutive of texts, thus, all texts must meet them. The other five elements, however, are context-dependent.

Context

In response to van Dijk (1990) defining discourse as "text in context" (p. 164, as cited in Wodak, 2008, p. 5), Wodak asserts that context is probably "one of the most complex, vague and challenging notions for research in DS [Discourse Studies]" (Wodak, 2008, p. 5). In DHA, context is central to the analytic approach and contributes to the high level of interdisciplinarity proposed by Critical Discourse Studies: when investigating complex social problems, multiple theoretical approaches are needed to analyse given contexts and to relate them to texts. Depending on the research object, a DHA-led analysis will include historical, political, sociological and/or psychological dimensions. In order to achieve triangulation, four levels of context are taken into account: 1) text internal co-text; 2) intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between texts and discourses; 3) extra-linguistic social variables and institutional frames in a specific situation ('context of the situation'); 4) broader sociopolitical and historical context, in which discursive practices are embedded (ibid).

The interdiscursivity in level 2 is understood as the quality of discourses to link to one another. Following the conception of discourse as topic-related, we observe that discourses on one topic can often refer to topics or sub-topics of other discourses (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). For instance, the discourse about higher education internationalisation frequently refers to discourses about higher education rankings or the higher education market, or globalization. This further shows that discourses are not homogeneous and closed but rather hybrid and open. Intertextuality is a similar process which is observed among texts. It means that texts are linked to other texts, both past and present. These connections can be made via reference to topics, main actors, same events or by the transfer of arguments from one text to another as well as other means of similar nature. These features in conjunction with detailed contextual analysis allows to investigate how discourses change in relationship to sociopolitical change (ibid).

Recontextualisation

The process of transferring discursive elements from one context to another is called recontextualisation. When an element is removed from its original (in terms of analysis) context, it is decontextualized. If it is then placed into a new context, that is, recontextualised, it partially acquires a new meaning because meanings are formed in use and are context-mediated. Reisigl and Wodak (2016) give an example of a political speech being reported on in various newspapers. After the speech is given, journalists choose specific quotes of the speech to suit the needs of the article and the fragments of the speech they choose will be recontextualised in the article. During the process these quotations can acquire new meanings in the specific context of press coverage. In the context of this study we can look at the national legislation on higher education or international education and then look at how certain arguments or norms are referred to (re-contextualised) in the university strategies or guidelines on internationalisation.

Another case of recontextualisation provided by Fairclough (2016) is that of how discourses which originate in a specific social field or institution (similarly to the example of higher education above) may be recontextualised in other fields or institutions. An obvious example is the neoliberal economic discourse which found a new home in the broader education field, and, especially so, in higher education. Such recontextualisation is ambivalent in the sense that it can be both seen as a kind of colonization of one field/institution by another or an appropriation of discourses, often incorporated into strategies pursued by particular groups within the field into which the elements are recontextualised. An example Fairclough provides of such a case of recontextualisation is pertinent to this study as well. He asserts that "the 'transition' to a market economy and Western-style democratic government in the formerly socialist countries of Europe (…) has involved a 'colonizing' recontextualisation of discourses (e.g. discourses of 'privatization') which were, however, incorporated differently into strategies of new entrepreneurs, government officials, managers of state industries" (ibid, p. 89).

A similar pattern (albeit not discursive) has also been observed in the field of higher education. An analysis of the implementation of the Bologna process in Central and Eastern Europe has revealed that the higher education institutions (HEIs) under study displayed formal conformity with the new regulations (a process the authors very aptly called 'symbolic compliance'); however, when it came to implementation, the dominating trend was for the staff to "re-contextualize the Bologna action lines in different ways depending on their experiences and everyday practices, the type of HEIs and the discipline" (Leisyte et al., 2015). While this particular case of recontextualisation refers to observed behaviours and attitudes rather than discourses it serves to underline the implications of the process described by Fairclough above.

1.3. Concepts and Discourse: impact

1.3.1. Conceptual nature of discourse

The notion of recontextualisation serves as the first bridge between Conceptual History described in the first part of this chapter and the Discourse-Historical Approach. Michal Krzyżanowski (2016) posits that contemporary discourses are becoming increasingly more conceptual. In response, DHA needs new means and tools to investigate this kind of discourse. Krzyżanowski further suggests that two avenues should be taken: one, incorporation of ideas from Conceptual History; two, in-depth rethinking of the notion of recontextualisation and how it is conceptualised in Critical Discourse Studies. As he claims, these "might help tackling the conceptual dynamics in/of discourses by tracing the conceptual logic of discourse and identifying ideological ontologies of contemporary public and regulatory discourses" (Krzyżanowski, 2016, p. 308). This theoretical enrichment would also help investigate discourses in which "social practice is often regulated and where the image of non-agentic 'invisible' social change allows for legitimisation of the often negative social and politico-economic dynamics" (ibid, p. 308).

Krzyżanowski's argument goes that the increasingly conceptual nature of discourse manifests in the various debates and redefinitions of social and political concepts, often in place of representation of actual society or its members, and is the symptom of the hegemonic neoliberal discourse. One of the main features of neoliberalism is the introduction of various economic and market-related arguments into public domains. According to Krzyżanowski, this process involves various discursive shifts that, in effect, alter the ways in which social action and society are represented in the public realm. Thus, neoliberalism results in ideological and conceptual discursive struggles that serve in “creating and legitimising an image of invisible social change” (ibid, p. 311). This is particularly prominent in various hybrid regulatory discourses which operationalise neoliberal policies.

While these policies and regulatory discourses are debated with increased frequency, social change is not “represented in discourse as such but is often portrayed as a purely ideological or conceptual transition” (ibid, p. 311). Krzyżanowski maintains that this occurs due to the conceptual nature of neoliberalism itself and the fact that it currently rests on context-specific recontextualisations of global neoliberal ideologies. In response to this situation Krzyżanowski suggests going back to the roots of the previously discussed process of recontextualisation. Upon a closer re-reading of Bernstein’s Structuring of the Pedagogic Discourse (1990), he argues that Bernstein understood recontextualisation as not merely a movement of discursive elements but as “a strategic process of establishing a certain hierarchy of discourses” (ibid, p. 314). Referencing the three stages of recontextualisation (production, decontextualisation, recontextualisation) and the respective three types of related context (the primary (the ‘source’ context of discourse production), secondary (the ‘target’ context of discourse reproduction) and the recontextualising context (the context through which discourse is relocated and reordered (Bernstein, 1990, p. 193 as cited in Krzyżanowski, 2016)), Krzyżanowski asserts that both production and decontextualisation must be taken into account because it is precisely during the latter process that discourses are ideologically re-positioned (Krzyżanowski, 2016).

As processes and policies are being renamed as different concepts, the latter come to dominate public discourses, and the meanings of which, therefore, require closer critical scrutiny. In response to such conceptual overhaul of contemporary discourse, Krzyżanowski proposes that notions central to Conceptual History, for example, semantic field, prove crucial as entry points for CDS-driven theorisation and analysis of discourses dominated by concepts and conceptualisation processes. In effect, he proposes here what he will later call discourse-conceptual analysis (DCA) (Krzyżanowski, 2019): a Conceptual History-informed Discourse Historical Approach-led analysis. In addition to argumentation-oriented critical discourse analysis, the analysis here also aims to establish a discourse-conceptual connection which is displayed by the semantic field of the concept under study (in Krzyżanowski’s example – Brexit). In the proposed method, the semantic field provides a generalised representation of the key ideas related to the concept observed in the research corpus and "serves as a map of key argumentative lines (*topoi*) through which the 'Brexit' concept was constructed (i.e. argued for/against) and thereby particularised in/via crisis-oriented discourse along both nationally-specific or ideological (liberal vs. conservative) lines" (Krzyżanowski, 2019, p. 470). This remains the most elaborate and developed attempt to combine Conceptual History and Critical Discourse Studies. We shall further discuss the possibility for such combinatory efforts.

1.3.2. Concepts and ideology

Ideology is another meeting point for Conceptual History and the Discourse-Historical Approach. As discussed above, recontextualisation implies a relocation of an essentially ideological nature. Koselleck maintained that modern concepts become more vulnerable to incorporation into ideologies due to the reduced experiential load in the concept and the increased sense of expectation: "A defining experience of the modern world is the loss of those specific and particularistic terms" (Koselleck, 2011, p. 13). This leads to many concepts turning into abstract formulas which require ideologies for their legitimation. According to Koselleck, Conceptual History, therefore, has the capacity to detect the turning of concepts to ideological purposes (ibid). This is closely linked with what we can call the prescriptive power of concepts, wherein concepts are not only indicators but also factors of conceptual change (Koselleck, 2004).

Given that the complexity of the interpretative range of a concept is effectively impossible to express in any 'real-world' understandings (provided we do not consider a very long list of mutually incompatible elements a suitable form of expression), employing concepts is always selective (whether deliberate or unintended). This underlines the fact that concepts are activated in language-in-use, not floating in some de-contextualised ether. While conceptual historians primarily focus on this in terms of continuities and discontinuities, it is also a matter of cultural choice (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). Furthermore, as Ifversen notes, "a word becomes a concept precisely because it gets involved in action stemming from a certain situation or context. It is made into a concept by speaking and writing actors" (Ifversen, 2011, p. 74). These actors, however, are constrained by the (synchronic) context which determines what is 'sayable' or even thinkable in a specific situation (Jordheim, 2012). In his analysis of the concept of crisis Koselleck argues that 'crisis' can be employed to indicate the necessity and legitimacy of a political act (Richter & Richter, 2006). Thus, the potential sphere of action of a concept or the prescriptive power it has, is essentially coded (in the linguistic sense) in the shifting meanings and the actual use of the concept.

1.3.3. Operationalising concepts

Introduced by Krzyżanowski, operationalising concepts refer to concepts which "cease to be 'generalisations' of the broadly understood social reality and instead become operationalising concepts for the introduction and legitimation of various forms of regulation" (Krzyżanowski, 2016, p. 309). These often replace representations of social change or those social actors that are experiencing rapid and abrupt social processes. In his analysis of the development of the EU Language and Multilingualism Policy (EULMP) over almost two decades between 1997 and 2015, Krzyżanowski shows how the central concept of the policy – multilingualism – becomes itself an operationalising concept. Its role within the policy discourse is to operationalise the wider ideological frames, namely, the neoliberal market-driven EU Lisbon Strategy recontextualised in the EULMP. This also underlines the ideological quality of the recontextualisation processes (Krzyżanowski, 2016). Another prominent example can be found in the EU immigration discourse which has substantially shifted towards the debate on the concept of integration. The discussion of the concept replaces the possible debate on the conditions for migrants amidst the various migration-related processes as if integration was something that was happening on its own and had little concern with either the immigrants, or the members of the host society. Furthermore, this allows the legitimisation of actually assimilationist policies when they are subsumed in a new concept and enables the criticism of migrants who allegedly "do not want to integrate", "do not participate in integration", etc. (Krzyżanowski, 2016, pp. 309–310).

After the initial stages of research, the aforementioned types of conceptual behaviour have been observed with regard to internationalisation as well. We shall come back to these categories in Chapter 6 when we elaborate on the findings of the study. Further, though, we shall focus on the meeting points between Conceptual History and Critical Discourse Studies and how the two are combined in this study.

1.3.4. Intersections

There are several areas in which potential intersections between Conceptual History and Critical Discourse Studies may be considered. As Krzyżanowski (2016) notes, "despite using different terms ('discourse' understood mainly as a continuity of social meanings vs. ‘concepts’ as the historically contingent accumulation of such meanings, etc.) – [the two] share many theoretical ideas about language and its role in structuring as well as re-structuring society, social reality and history. Among these, both approaches share the idea that forms of language (discourses/concepts) reappear – or are, as CDS would have it, ‘recontextualised’ – across different fields, spaces and genres” (p. 313). In addition to what has already been discussed, two aspects should be stressed. First, both approaches (if we take DHA as the representative of CDS) lean more towards structures than individuals but are not structuralist in essence; they have, rather, developed in light of structuralism. DHA was influenced by Foucauldian post-structuralism (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) and in CH, Koselleck’s understanding of simultaneity of the non-simultaneous developed in dialogue and opposition to Sausurrean structural linguistics (Jordheim, 2021). Koselleck argued for the different rhythms or durations in history, what he termed ‘diachronic structures’. Later he would propose to study these different rhythms as “different time layers embedded in concepts” (Ifversen, 2017, p. 4). This points to both approaches focusing on structures of repetition and constraint rather than individual actors.

Another aspect of similarity and a crucial one at that is that both Conceptual History and Critical Discourse Studies (here, DHA especially so) aim to analyse change or absence of change. In DHA, this is conveyed particularly in the analysis of discursive shifts which have the capacity to alter the ways in which society and social action are represented in public spaces (Krzyżanowski, 2016). In Conceptual History, conceptual change is manifold and is closely related to Koselleck’s ideas on multiple temporalities. Nonetheless, it is precisely the diachronic investigation of the sedimented meanings of a concept that enable a conceptual historian to uncover what Koselleck refers to as “long-term structural transformations” (Koselleck, 2011, p. 18).

Even more interesting is the inclination of both CDS and CH to deal with absence of change. In his latest works Koselleck is in line with Martin Heidegger, one of his early teachers, who opposed the depiction of history as being frozen when, in reality, he claimed, history was something that always took place (Jordheim, 2012). Koselleck, thus, advocated that the task upon future historians would be to investigate “what is really new in our so-called Neuzeit [‘modern age’ in German], in the sense that it doesn’t repeat what used to be the case” or “what was yet already there and only returns in a new guise” (Koselleck, 2010, p. 98, as translated in Jordheim, 2012, p. 156). This is almost directly reflected in a somewhat programmatic statement by

Blommaert (2005): "a critical analysis of discourse necessarily needs to transcend the present and address history in and through language. (…) We need to take history seriously, for part of the critical punch of what we do may ultimately lie in our capacity to show that what looks new is not new at all, but the outcome of a particular process which is systemic, not accidental" (p. 37). While there are certain differences, both CH and CDS conceive of the relationship between language, society and history in complementary ways which allow for a meaningful combination of the two approaches.

1.3.5. Point of arrival

Epistemologically, I depart from Conceptual History and construct this research with the purpose to track the development of the concept of internationalisation rather than the discourses of internationalisation. However, I also see the concept of internationalisation embedded in the wider discursive architecture of higher education and, therefore, aim to complement the methodological approach of Conceptual History with the procedures provided by the Discourse-Historical Approach. As theoretical underpinnings of discourse and its mutually constitutive relationship with the society comes part and parcel with critical discourse studies, I perceive and employ the notions of discourse, text, context and recontextualisation in line with the DHA.

I also view these as fields and indicators of particular conceptual behaviours and not in contradiction to how concepts are used in language-in-use. The two theoretical approaches inform the methodology which is developed in line with the DHA but does not undermine the methodological implications of Conceptual History. The fundamental aim is to investigate the development of the concept of higher education internationalisation in two Eastern European countries, Estonia and Lithuania, from 1990 to 2020. In contrasting the semantic fields of internationalisation in different periods of time I purport to show what has changed and what has remained the same in the conceptual architecture of internationalisation. Moreover, I strive to position these conceptual changes and movements in the wider discursive architecture of Eastern European higher education.

The methodological procedures and the limitations of the study are detailed in Chapter 4 (Research Design). In the following chapter we shall trace the development of internationalisation as a study object as well as a higher education process.

2. INTERNATIONALISATION

The object of this thesis is the internationalisation of higher education in Eastern Europe from 1990 to 2020. Before we turn to the specific conceptual development in the given spatial and temporal frame, we shall delve deeper into the notion of internationalisation. In the following chapter we will discuss the historical development of the process of internationalisation and the definition of internationalisation as well as its newest variations.

2.1. Development of higher education internationalisation throughout the 20th century

Although universities are often considered inherently international, historically, a number of the universities which originated in the 18th and 19th centuries were geared primarily towards nation-building at the time (De Wit & Merkx, 2021). Moreover, it is important to consider that 'international' can only exist in opposition (or in conjunction) with the 'national'. Therefore, the universities of the Middle Ages could not be international in our understanding of the word, because there were no nation-states at the time. This does not deny the migration of students and scholars, however. According to de Wit and Merkx, prior to the 18th century we can only speak of a medieval "European space" (which shared a common religious identity, uniform academic language (Latin), study programs and examinations (Neave, 1997, p. 6 as cited in de Wit & Merkx, 2021, p. 26)) that bears a slight resemblance to the current European higher education space, in particular with regards to English as the common academic language.

The emergence of political and cultural nationalism in the second half of the 19th century challenged the European universalistic spirit of the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment and universities became institutions intended to serve the professional needs and ideological demands of the newly established European nation-states. In the first development stage of the 18th and 19th centuries, de Wit & Merkx (2021) identified three international aspects of higher education: "dissemination of research, international mobility of students and scholars, and export of higher education systems" (p. 27). The latest point, which the authors consider to be the most important in the given period, refers to the export from the colonial states to the colonies and later the colonies-turned-independent states. Yet, it is still very distant to the notion of internationalisation of today and, according to the authors, is best described as "academic colonialism" or "academic imperialism" (p. 28). Overall, during the period from the end of Renaissance to the 20th century, higher education was predominantly oriented towards the development of national identity and serving national needs.

The beginning of the 20th century in terms of higher education internationalisation was marked by the establishment of various institutions responsible for international cooperation and exchange, such as Institute of International Education (1919 in the United States), the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, more commonly known as DAAD, (1925 in Germany) and the British Council (1934 in the United Kingdom). Academic cooperation was more focused on scholars rather than students and post-World War I was driven by rationales of peace and mutual understanding. The first two decades of the century demonstrate a growth in academic mobility, particularly to the United States (mobility in earlier times was largely to Europe) and the emergence of institutional exchange and study abroad programmes (the region of destination is still primarily Europe). After World War II, the expansion of international higher education took place in the United States as Europe was investing in reconstruction rather than international exchange and cooperation. This marked a radical shift in the global map of higher education as many European scholars perished in the two wars or emigrated to the safer areas of the world such as the United States, Canada and Australia. These regions emerged as the new centres of international higher education in the post-war period. Together with the shift in focus, a shift in rationale was observed: peace and mutual understanding may have continued to be a driving rationale in theory; however, national security became the primary force for governmental spending on international education (de Wit & Merkx, 2021).

The divided post-war Europe took rather different paths in internationalisation and this is the time where we can distinguish between distinct understandings of internationalisation founded on different ideologies and political agendas. From this period onwards, the interconnectedness of higher education internationalisation and the foreign policies of national states is always, to a varying degree of explicitness, present. In Western Europe, not occupied or controlled by Soviet Russia, the first several post-war decades were dedicated to reconstruction, and internationalisation (still mostly consisting of student mobility) was largely individual-based. Degree-based student mobility existed in the shape of elite students from developing countries seeking higher education in the colonial or imperial countries to which they were linked (for instance, the UK, France or Belgium and the Netherlands). Small numbers of students and staff also participated in exchange based on inter-governmental cultural and scientific agreements. Policies for internationalisation were not developed neither on European, national nor institutional level. International exchange and cooperation was often included in bilateral agreements between countries and higher education institutions were not actively involved in these programmes.

While in the US the main rationales for international exchange and cooperation remained defence, public diplomacy and security, a different approach was taken up in the Western European countries. Throughout the 1980s, European countries began changing their open approach towards individual mobility. The first full-cost fees for foreign students were introduced in the UK in 1979 and soon, the export commodity approach to international higher education became dominant in the UK as well as in Australia. These examples were slight outliers in the continental European context where the greater attention given to exchange programmes, particularly, Erasmus, in the 1980s and 1990s, marginalized the individual student mobility fostered by political or economic considerations. Broadly speaking, the international dimension shifted from the incidental and individual towards the organised in the form of projects and programmes driven more by nation states than higher education institutions themselves. At the time, hosting of foreign students was largely based on foreign policy arguments rather than economic rationales; that, however, changed by the end of the 20th century as the aforementioned movement of students as an export commodity became a more important element of higher education policy at both national and institutional level (de Wit & Merkx, 2021).

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the picture was different. The incorporation of previously independent states into the Soviet Union by Soviet Russia was followed by the re-education of those populations and higher education was one of the tools used for this end. Academic autonomy was close to non-existent in the USSR as well as the so-called Eastern Bloc and academic cooperation and exchange were severely limited. It is sometimes argued that the cooperation among the states inside the USSR and between USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries flourished; however, the process had a very clear ideological dimension of a coercive character – the "Sovietization" of these countries came with ideological, social and political pressures as well as restructuring of their higher education systems (de Wit & Merkx, 2021). International higher education in the USSR was perceived first and foremost as a tool to spread its influence. This resulted in an increase of cooperation with other socialist countries as well as involvement in development projects in Asia, Latin America and Africa (Tsvetkova, 2008).

In terms of international exchange inside the USSR, students and staff could only visit other countries of the Soviet Union (Tromly, 2014) and had little opportunity to expand their networks to the other side of the Iron Curtain.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War made a prominent impact on global higher education. By that time, in both the US and the European Union, the debate on internationalisation had been turning towards economic rationales and competitiveness became the most popular one. The ideological competitiveness between "the West" and the USSR was supplanted by the more widespread economic competition between the US, the European Union and other countries with strong economies, for instance, Japan. In continental (Western) Europe, that was, however, supplemented with internal cooperation, especially among European Union member states with the purpose to improve their position globally. The Maastricht Treaty (ratified by all member states in 1993) included education for the first time and ended the period of informal educational policy in the European Community. The European Commission became a prominent player in European higher education, not limited to educational mobility and exchange, and especially active in the newly independent Eastern and Central European states (de Wit & Merkx, 2021).

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries in the Soviet sphere of influence were subjected to the ideological hegemony of communism and the Soviet Russia-driven organizational constraints. Prior to that, many of the same countries had survived earlier occupations by imperial powers and the Nazi regime which also had detrimental impacts on higher education. In view of such histories, the restoration of universities became a crucial and urgent task for democratic societies. Two main trends were observed in this process of restoration. In many cases, the communist past was discarded in favour of pre-communist traditions. Another path was to actively draw inspiration from transnational policy platforms such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank which provided both funding and guidance in the 1990s (Dobbins & Kwiek, 2017a).

The 1990s also marked important qualitative shifts in internationalisation. The predominant vertical pattern of cooperation and mobility was supplanted by international relationships on more equal terms and the heretofore piecemeal approach mostly focused on student mobility gave way to more systematic policies of internationalisation (de Wit & Merkx, 2021). At the very end of the decade, in 1999, an event that would shape European higher education and internationalisation to an unprecedented extent took place. The first meeting of European education ministers in Bologna was the start of the eponymous Bologna Process.

2.2. The big shift in European higher education: The Bologna Process

No other development in higher education has yet had as much impact on European universities as the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is rightly considered one of the largest reform projects in higher education to date (Huisman et al., 2012). Its subsequent impact on internationalisation cannot be overstated. The rather brief document (4 pages, including the signatures) signed by the representatives of 29 European countries in Bologna on June 19, 1999, set out six rather vague objectives to be reached by 2010:

- adopt a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- adopt essentially a two-cycle system: undergraduate and graduate;
- establish a credit system such as ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) to promote widespread mobility across Europe;
- promote student and staff mobility;
- promote European cooperation in quality assurance;
- promote the European dimension in higher education, particularly in curriculum development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

The vagueness of objectives may have been purposeful as the Bologna Declaration was not a precise strategy but rather, as Huisman et al. (2012) have put it, "an attempt to set a policy train in motion" (p. 84). Throughout the decade from 2000 to 2010, the original policy aims changed direction and new objectives were added for the next decade.

The Bologna Process came upon in a time when the national and European higher education academic mobility policy initiatives (such as the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (Erasmus), launched in 1987) were largely driven by cultural and academic rationales. Also, education at the time was considered an area of national sovereignty and the member states were reluctant to consider supra-governmental coordination and integration. However, this tendency encountered the reality of increasing student mobility and the rising economic imperatives of higher education. The first led to the emergence of mobility and internationalisation-related issues on the agendas of higher education institutions and national governments which were concerned with comparability of institutions for Erasmus exchange and the transparency and recognition of degree studies, respectively. The second, as discussed above, resulted in a gradual shift from cultural or academic rationales towards economic and competition-based ones. Internationalisation was also subsequently included in the broader EU agenda as higher education was considered a key driver for economic development and growth (Huisman et al., 2012).

A relatively common misconception is to equate the European Higher Education Area with the EU and perceive the Bologna Process as being led by the European Commission or another EU-based institution. While it is not actually the case, the European Union bodies have indeed been involved in the Bologna Process from its inception and its education and science policy throughout the 21st century was very much aligned with the objectives of the Bologna Process. Shortly after the Bologna Declaration, in 2000, the European Council launched the Lisbon Process which set out to make the EU the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. The focus of it was more on research and development but it definitely pertains to education in certain aspects, at the very least because most European universities provide both teaching and research. The higher education strategy later developed by the European Commission that built on the Lisbon Process also brought on board elements of the Bologna Process.

2.2.1. Impact of the Bologna Process to the internationalisation of European higher education

There is no shortage of research which demonstrates that the outcomes of the Bologna Process have differed greatly in the signatory countries. In some cases, the progress was slower, certain measures may have been disregarded altogether by some signatories and implemented fully by others. The reasons are manifold but they have been aptly summarized by Huisman et al. (2012): 1) the signatory countries departed from different situations and differed in the speed of implementation of change; 2) different national political agendas emphasised different priorities and interpreted elements of the Bologna Process in a way that better fit the national political context; 3) institutions, managers and professionals in different countries perceived differently the importance and relevance of the proposed changes.

Nonetheless, the level of coherence among the higher education institutions in the signatory countries has undoubtedly increased throughout the 30-year long process. Overall, internationalisation remains one of the main pillars of the Bologna process and both encourages and benefits from increased convergence of European higher education systems. According to the 2020 Bologna Process Implementation Report, “the Bologna Process itself has been both a manifestation and a catalyst for internationalisation” (European Education and Culture Executive Agency: Eurydice, 2020, p. 123). Historically and, at least in terms of discourse, currently as well, mobility remains the main focus of internationalisation as it is understood within the Bologna Process. Recognising that the understanding of internationalisation has changed in the past 20 years, the authors of the report, who set out to measure the achievements of the Bologna Process in different fields, including internationalisation, rightly ask what understanding of internationalisation should the achievements (or lack thereof) be measured against?

The question remains open and they largely report on the mobility trends and achievements vis-á-vis the goals set out throughout the Bologna Process. The target of 20% of graduates experiencing mobility by 2020 set out in the Leuven Communique in 2009 has not been met with the overall weighted average for the EHEA standing at 9.4% with significant differences between countries and imbalances in outward-inward mobility. However, according to the authors of the Report, the target was set "somewhat blindly" (ibid, p. 155) and significant growth in actual numbers of mobile students would have been required to increase the overall percentage. Even though the target has not been met, the authors argue that the setting of an ambitious target repositioned mobility at the top of the political agenda and put pressure on improving the international data collection on mobility in general, and on credit mobility in particular.

Moreover, despite various persisting problems in measuring student mobility, it is evident that mobility has grown considerably during the past two decades. It is not necessarily a direct consequence of the Bologna Process and a causal link cannot be easily established. However, the focus on improving recognition, introduction of the ECTS, Diploma Supplement and portability of student support which is available in some signatory countries are likely to have facilitated both credit and degree mobility. The development of a common three cycle system has also contributed to increased internationalisation thanks to the possibility of completing one cycle of studies in one country and then studying another cycle in a different country. The three-cycle system is also credited with the success of joint international master programmes developed within the Erasmus Mundus programme.

While the understanding of internationalisation within the Bologna Process remained mobility-oriented, in general internationalisation practice and research, the developments have been rapid and vast. In the following chapter, we shall discuss the various shifts in more depth and trace the trajectory of internationalisation from the obvious – international mobility – to the radical – critical internationalisation.

2.3. The evolving definitions and realities: from International Mobility to Critical Internationalisation

In the period from 1990 to today, internationalisation has become one of the most prominent trends of global higher education. Writing in 2012, Rumbley, Altbach and Reisberg (2012) conclude that "[in the last two decades] from a relatively marginal position on the agendas of institutions, nations and international organizations, internationalization has acquired a significant profile at the highest levels of policymaking and institutional leadership in many corners of the world" (p. 23). The development of internationalisation as it concerns the topic of this thesis, therefore, is twofold. There is the development of the activity of internationalisation, that is, what various stakeholders *do* under the banner of internationalisation. Then, there is also the development and the evolution of the definition of internationalisation, that is, how the notion of internationalisation is defined and described by internationalisation professionals and researchers. In many instances, the authors cited in this chapter use the phrase 'concept of internationalisation'; here we will use 'definition' instead, to avoid confusion between the everyday use of the word 'concept' and a concept in the Koselleckian sense, as a research object.

The two, of course, do not develop separately and the activities shape the definition inasmuch the definition suggests the activities. Both are underscored by a broader understanding of what internationalisation is there *for*. Historically perceived as a reaction and a companion trend to globalization, internationalisation has been considered as "a toolkit of responses available (…) to address the many and diverse opportunities and imperatives presented by the overwhelming forces of globalization" (Rumbley et al., 2012, p. 4). However, by the second decade of the 21st century, internationalisation has moved from a toolkit to a strategic objective essential to institutions and systems of higher education. Internationalisation emerged as an agent of change itself, capable of bringing about new models for the organisation and delivery of higher education (ibid). In terms of the practical application of internationalisation, the term itself has been growing in popularity since the 1980s. In 1997, the Journal of Studies in International Education (JSIE), the primary outlet for internationalisation research, was established. Primarily understood as a means to foster academic mobility and educational exchange, in the first decade of the 21st century, internationalisation bifurcated into two interdependent pillars – 'internationalisation at home' and 'internationalisation abroad' (Knight, 2012).

As the importance of internationalisation grew, it soon became obvious that the number of academically mobile people was very low, and this led to the emergence of internationalisation at home that is concerned with all students which attend the university and the activities carried out by their home university (Wächter, 2000). Originally more focused on the intercultural aspects of the teaching and learning process and the curriculum, internationalisation at home later came to refer to a variety of internationally-oriented activities performed by the home university. They range from new international programmes, virtual student mobility and international conferences and seminars to global development programmes, student clubs and involvement of representatives of local cultural and ethnic groups in the teaching and learning activities (Knight, 2012). A further development in the internationalisation at home strand is the development of internationalisation of the curriculum (Leask, 2009). Aside from the developments in how internationalisation is structured, a slightly later but parallel development sought to modify or challenge the understanding of internationalisation with the help of adjectives such as comprehensive, intelligent, humanistic or critical (Hunter et al., 2021). The development of the research field and the definitions of internationalisation are discussed in the following sections.

2.3.1. Internationalisation: the combining parts and development of definitions

As the field of internationalisation research rapidly developed in the past decades, several valuable efforts have been made to overview the growing amount of literature on the subject. Kehm and Teichler (2007) have identified seven broad themes of internationalisation research articles published during this period in the Journal of Studies in International Education (JSIE): "mobility of students and academic staff, mutual influences of higher education systems on each other, internationalisation of the substance of teaching, learning, and research, institutional strategies of internationalisation, knowledge transfer, cooperation and competition, national and supranational policies as regarding the international dimension of higher education" (p. 264).

Similar conclusions have also been drawn in a recent analysis of all articles published in JSIE conducted by Bedenlier, Kondacki, and Zawacki-Richter (2018). Having analysed the data of all titles and abstracts of the 406 articles published in JSIE from 1997 to 2016 (first issue) the authors have concluded that in terms of the topics, the delineation of the field (from 1997 to 2001) was followed by the institutionalisation and management of internationalisation (from 2002 to 2006) and consequences of internationalisation which concern student needs and support structures (from 2007 to 2011). The last period analysed (2012–2016) is, thus, marked by the move from the institutional to the transnational context of internationalisation.

The shifting priorities and different foci during different periods of time can also be observed in the changing scholarly definitions. The often cited definition proposed by Jane Knight (2004) defined internationalisation as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education" (p. 11). Internationalisation at home was defined as "any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student and staff mobility" (Wachter, 2000, p. 6) and internationalisation of curriculum as "the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning processes and support services of a program of study" (Leask, 2009, p. 209).

Coincidentally, all of these were revised in 2015. Internationalisation was re-defined as "an intentional process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into teaching, research and service functions of the institution in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society" (De Wit et al., 2015, p. 281). The revised definition of internationalisation at home refers to "the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students in domestic learning environments" (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 69), and the definition of internationalisation of curriculum was reformulated by its original author into "the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study" (Leask, 2015, p. 9).

Both the original definitions and the re-definitions were formulated with a specific purpose in mind. Particularly, in the case of internationalisation and internationalisation at home, the aim was to introduce a common denominator to ease the mutual understanding among internationalisation professionals. Jane Knight explicitly maintained that the definition of internationalisation must be generic enough to apply to a variety of countries, cultures and education systems, therefore, it needs to be neutral (Knight, 2012). This neutrality, however, is one of the primary reasons for the re-definition which takes on a more normative dimension via the inclusion of "contribution to society" and "learning for all" as desired goals. This is described as "a deliberate attempt to close the gap between rhetoric and reality by providing an overarching purpose to internationalization and encouraging institutions to reflect more on their rationales" (Hunter et al., 2021, p. 67). Originally devised in reaction to the one-sided emphasis on mobility in internationalisation, after the revision, the notions of internationalisation at home and internationalisation of curriculum overlap significantly, with the exception that internationalisation of curriculum may include activities abroad whereas internationalisation at home, by definition, cannot.

2.3.2. Multiple internationalisations: from comprehensive to critical

Further complicating the issue of various definitions of internationalisation is the proliferation of labelled internationalisations. Hunter et al. (2021) note the growing trend and list seven variants of labelled internationalisation. The definitions of these notions often keep the Knight definition or aspects of it and add a specific ideal, value or goal to the description. The most popular of the labelled ones is comprehensive internationalisation, initially developed by the American Council on Education and later elaborated by John Hudzik (2011; 2015) In essence, comprehensive internationalisation implies that internationalisation should address all aspects of education in an integrated way, including quality assurance mechanisms, institutional policies and discipline-specific accreditations.

Another example, intelligent internationalisation, developed by Laura E. Rumbley (2015), calls for more collaboration among researchers and internationalisation practitioners: "[intelligent internationalization] is grounded in a body of knowledge that coherently encompasses both theory and practice aimed at improving our understanding of the complex realities of internationalization locally and globally" (p. 16). According to Rumbley, intelligent internationalization also entails a "commitment to the training of thoughtful practitioners in the field, working in tandem with researchers, policymakers, and institutional leaders who are sensitive to the practicalities that reside within the "big issues" dominating so many strategic discussions about internationalization today" (p. 17).

Critical internationalisation is the result of what has been named "the critical turn" in internationalisation studies (Hunter et al., 2021). The authors admit that "over the past decades, most scholarly and public attention with respect to internationalization in higher education focused on the Western world and paradigms" (p. 58). Critical internationalisation studies (Buckner & Stein, 2019) developed amid the multiple concerns that internationalisation was losing its way or even was forecast to disappear altogether (Brandenburg and de Wit, 2011; Knight, 2011, 2014); some of these concerns may be read rather as concerns about a potential decline in the dominance of Western higher education. In opposition to what Buckner and Stein call "mainstream approaches", critically oriented scholars and practitioners problematize the "presumed innocence and importance of the internationalisation imperative" (Buckner & Stein, 2019, p. 3) and identify patterns of "Eurocentric knowledge production, exploitative relationships and inequitable access to resources" (ibid). In the view of critical internationalisation studies, further development of internationalisation raises many questions. These include the concern that the de-centering of the West has the potential to result merely in the proposal of a new centre that may repeat the same patterns of hierarchy, as well as the question of whether critical internationalisation scholars should abandon the notion of internationalisation and invent a new name, or strategically utilise internationalisation and reframe its meanings (Buckner & Stein, 2019).

While internationalisation has long ceased to be a primarily Western endeavour, the development of internationalisation has largely been dictated by the Western and English-speaking higher education institutions, both in practice and research. In the following section, we discuss the development of internationalisation research in the so-called periphery of higher education research, the area which is the focus of this thesis – Eastern Europe.

2.4. The centres and peripheries of internationalisation research

The various definitions discussed in the previous sections, have all been conceptualised in the English-speaking world with the participation of researchers working in the Global West. Even though theoretically all countries can participate in internationalisation on equal ground, in practice, the scientific and cultural hegemony of the English language benefits countries where English is the dominant language in attracting international students as well as facilitating the entire process (Hughes, 2008). While comparative data is limited, a deeper analysis of the Fourth Global Survey on Internationalization of Higher Education conducted in 2013 (1,439 HEIs from 137 countries participated) shows that specific trends can be observed in the Anglophone (the category consists of the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand) world. For instance, HEIs in this group were more likely to choose increased revenue as their primary benefit of internationalisation (Buckner, 2019).

As Bedenlier, Kondacki, and Zawacki-Richter (2018) observe, in terms of the geographical representation of internationalisation research, the majority (58.4 per cent) of publications are still contributed by authors from the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. Papers by researchers from Central and Eastern Europe comprise 0.7 per cent of all articles (2 articles are contributed by authors from Latvia and 1, from Poland) prompting the authors to conclude that contributions by Eastern European authors remain low in number. A further research by Kosmützky and Putty (2016) on transnational, offshore, cross-border, and borderless higher education using 1,931 publications does not provide surprises either. In the most-frequent keyword list, Europe is only represented by Germany (mentioned 22 times); the most frequent country keywords are either the main English-speaking academic mobility destination countries (e.g., the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada) which are usually the "providers" of transnational education, or the "receivers" of such education located in the Middle East and Asia (e.g., China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Qatar) (Kosmützky & Putty, 2016). Expanding the scope of the literature review, Kuzhabekova, Hendel and Chapman (2015) analysed the papers on international higher education in the Web of Science database from 2002 to 2011. They concluded that even though the overall number of articles increased, the research is still dominated by several Western countries. The majority of papers were authored by researchers from institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia with notable additions from South Africa and China. However, Central and Eastern Europe (referred to as former Soviet Union in the article) still remains invisible (Kuzhabekova et al., 2015).

Overall, the majority of internationalisation research still comes from the so-called centre of the higher education research community, the English speaking countries or those with long internationalisation traditions located in the Global West. The region under investigation in this study, Eastern Europe, as has been pointed out by multiple researchers in the field (Bedenlier et al., 2018; Kehm & Teichler, 2007; Kosmützky & Krücken, 2014; Kuzhabekova et al., 2015). The reasons for this state of affairs is most often found in the recent history of the region. Central and Eastern Europe has joined the internationalisation trend significantly later due to historic circumstances since as part of the Soviet bloc they only had limited possibilities to visit other countries of the Soviet Union and virtually no opportunity to expand their academic networks to the other side of the Iron Curtain (Zelvys, 2015b).

Prior to EU accession these countries have participated in multiple programmes specifically designed to help them prepare to join the EU, most of which were primarily concerned with international cooperation (e.g., SOCRATES or TEMPUS). As the goals of the EU and those of the national stakeholders were similar in terms of increased international cooperation, better social integration as well as improved quality of education and graduate employability, such initiatives and programmes had a long-lasting impact on the education policies of these future EU members (Silova, 2011). Joining EU also resulted in reform initiatives related to greater unification and standardization of higher education systems across Europe (Želvys, 2020) which significantly helped facilitate international mobility as well as other internationalisation activities. While different countries chose diverse ways to reform their higher education in the 1990s, their diverging paths were most often guided by the wish to 'catch up to Europe' (Dakowska & Harmsen, 2015).

2.5. Internationalisation research in Central and Eastern Europe

The debates and developments discussed in the previous sections were happening to the west of the Elbe river. As internationalisation moved eastwards, the definition, or rather, definitions, were not as much debated as incorporated as they were. However, in reference to the ongoing debate on re-naming internationalisation, Whitsed and Green (2014) went as far as to say that "the act of renaming "internationalization" is a demonstration of (…) agency in the context of uneven distributions of power across the contested storylines of internationalization" (Whitsed & Green, 2014, p. 107). This statement prompted me to have a closer look at how internationalisation was named and defined and whether it was re-named or re-defined in any significant way in the internationalisation research of the region. A literature review I conducted in 2021 revealed little re-naming in Central and Eastern Europe (Orechova, 2021). The search of articles published in the two leading internationalisation journals (the Journal of Studies in International Education and the European Journal of Higher Education) from 2009 to 2020 which analyse internationalisation in any of the countries in the region resulted in 32 articles. In the majority of them (25) the term or the definition of internationalisation was not explicitly discussed. The qualitative analysis of the other 7 (with the addition of 3 articles published in other journals which discussed the definition) revealed three general trends.

Aside from introducing a different term, i.e. Europeanization (Dakowska & Harmsen, 2015; Dobbins, 2015; Vukasovic, 2013), researchers generally choose not to explicitly redefine internationalisation, e.g., (Dima & Vasilache, 2016; Hauptman Komotar, 2018; Zgaga, 2013). However, there are certain observable differences in how internationalisation is perceived. Three main tendencies among the articles analysed regarding the notion of internationalisation were observed:

a) internationalisation as a process of higher education policy change due to explicit requirements by supranational bodies and/or agencies (e.g., the European Commission) or the general education policy discourse in the region (also often referred to as Europeanization);

b) internationalisation as an umbrella term for multiple international activities taking place at a university (mobility, research requirements) and a general push towards active participation in the international higher education area. In these cases, it is often not explicitly defined and the reader is expected to infer their own meaning of the term;

c) internationalisation as integration of an international dimension into higher education with the explicit purpose to improve the quality of education. This understanding is built on the commonly accepted definition of higher education internationalisation referred to in the previous section.

As Europeanization is sometimes used in place of or together with internationalisation, it merits a deeper discussion. Dakowska and Harmsen (2015) draw upon the 'catch up to Europe' narrative and use Europeanization in relation to wider trends of internationalisation and globalization. The authors claim that Europeanization spans three core dimensions of the concept: first, the emergence and development of European-level governance structures in the higher education sector; second, the adaptation of national institutions and policies to European developments; third, the adoption of European norms and templates. Europeanization can broadly be observed in how the actors in higher education of CEE countries refer to Europe when constructing international education. While the international norms may be adopted, the adoption will be marked by national policy-making processes and conditioned by the pre-existing domestic norms, i.e., translated or re-contextualised in a national higher education context. These processes will be mediated by particular local actors whose personal or organizational international experience would also play a role in the final result of internationalisation (Dakowska & Harmsen, 2015).

Internationalisation of higher education in its current understanding can refer to an education process as well as an education policy. Europeanization, however, is most often used when talking about education policy or management (e. g., institutionalisation, governance, quality assurance) and not the education process itself (Dakowska & Harmsen, 2015; Deca, 2015; Dobbins, 2015; Vukasovic, 2013). In essence, it is a variation of the thinking that perceives internationalisation as a process of higher education policy change due to explicit requirements by supranational bodies and/or agencies (a).

Other authors chose to not explicitly define the concepts they use, understanding Europeanization and internationalisation as a general push towards international norms proposed by both European and wider international bodies (OECD, World Bank, etc.). This is sometimes expressed by the use of 'Europeanization/internationalisation'. The 'Europeanization/internationalisation' variation is used as a shorthand to refer to the process of translation or adoption of international norms by national actors (Deca, 2015), focusing more deeply on policy and institutional change rather than the education process. Internationalisation, then, is also used in the broader sense referring to various international activities conducted at universities (b).

Hauptman Komotar (2019) uses the term 'Europeanisation' in the sense of policy change encouraged by the wish to meet the requirements of the European Union (a) and 'internationalisation' to refer to the other aspects of introducing the international dimension into higher education (c). Hauptman Komotar's (2019) analysis also employs the traditional definition of internationalisation (c). She discusses both internationalisation abroad and at home, noting that these are still perceived as distinct processes in Slovenian higher education, and concludes that in Slovenia, internationalisation is still considered to be something that happens abroad and the notion itself is still foreign to some Slovenian HEIs (Hauptman Komotar, 2019). A similar path is chosen by Tamtik and Kirss (2015) who in their study on building a norm of internationalisation in Estonia, define internationalisation as "an intrinsic process built within and by the mutual activities of governments, higher education institutions, students, faculty, citizens, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other institutions" (Tamtik & Kirss, 2015, p. 165). While the authors re-formulate the definition, it maintains all the fundamental elements of the traditional one: internationalisation is a process and it works within and across all levels of higher education, including both policy and the educational process (c).

This overview allows to conclude that there is less focus in Central and Eastern Europe on the educational process than in the general field of internationalisation research. A significant part of research is mostly concerned with the institutionalisation and policy change of international norms whether it is explicitly stated in the definition of internationalisation or not. This is further supported by the fact that inside the universities internationalisation is understood as more of a managerial process of meeting certain requirements than a comprehensive process implied by the commonly used definition (for further discussion on this see also Hauptman Komotar, 2019; Tamtik & Kirss, 2015).

While the small number of internationalisation research specifically in Lithuania and Estonia hardly allows for generalisations and trends, certain variations can be observed. Research on internationalisation of the Lithuanian higher education sector usually takes the approach of management and governance (Greblikaitė et al., 2015; Valuckienė & Būdvytytė-Gudienė, 2013). The majority of research, however, is concerned with how internationalisation is or can be implemented. For instance, Urbanovič and colleagues (2016) analyse the Lithuanian case in terms of the issues and challenges small countries encounter in attracting and hosting international students. Karvelienė (2014) and Zuzeviciute et al. (2019) focus on the implementation of internationalisation in terms of the Bologna Process. Bulajeva (2005, 2013) pays attention to the various rationales higher education institutions have and the strategies they use to implement internationalisation.

A significant portion of the Lithuanian internationalisation research body is related to the quality of higher education and the assumed links between the two. For example, Sumskaite and Juknyte-Petreikiene (2016) aim to distinguish the parameters for the assessment of the impact internationalisation policy has on quality in Lithuanian higher education as well as its influence on the development of society (other works in the quality group include (Juknytė-Petreikienė, 2013; Juknytė-Petreikienė & Žydžiūnaitė, 2017)). Even though Želvys (2006) indicated the issue of the deterioration of the national scientific language as one of the future challenges of internationalisation, a comparatively small number of works tackle the tensions between the impetus to use English as the language of internationalisation and the role of Lithuanian in higher education (Bulajeva & Hogan-Brun, 2014; Kriaučiūnienė & Šlikaitė, 2022). My own work tackles the definition of internationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe (Orechova, 2021) discussed earlier in the chapter, as well as Lithuanian academics' understanding of and attitudes towards internationalisation (Orechova, 2023a).

An important work on internationalisation in Estonian higher education has been published by Tamtik and Kirss (2015) who analyse the emergence of internationalisation as building of a norm. Given the longer development of internationalisation in Estonia and the observed tensions between English and Estonian, the majority of research on Estonian higher education internationalisation tackles the issues related to language policy (Soler & Vihman, 2018; Soler-Carbonell & Gallego-Balsà, 2016). A number of language policy research articles published by scholars working in or around the Baltic area also compare several or all Baltic states in this regard (Soler, 2020; Soler, 2019; Kibbermann, 2017, Kaša & Ait Si Mhamed, 2013). Other notable works with a comparative approach include Tõnismann's research on the public research funding in the Baltic States from 1989 to 2010 with a focus on internationalisation of research (2019) and the practices and discourses of internationalisation in the sociology research communities of the Baltic States before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union (2022) as well as the research on the Estonian and Lithuanian experiences of attracting international staff by Rose and Leišytė (2016).

As we see, the number of research published on internationalisation in Estonia and Lithuania is limited and it follows the general trend of Central and Eastern European countries being under-represented in the global internationalisation research discourse. The particular trends can largely be attributed to the interests of several researchers and their personal or professional connections to the region. Since the focus on a concept from the perspective of conceptual history entails a particular spatio-temporal context, in the following section we will focus on the specific developments in the societies and higher education institutions in Lithuania and Estonia. Further, the works mentioned above which pertain to the questions of this study will be discussed in greater detail.

3. EASTERN EUROPE

Another facet of this study is the spatial and temporal context of the development of internationalisation. The period from 1990s onwards was a time of many changes in the region that Estonia and Lithuania at least geographically belong to. In Chapter 5, therefore, we also include the development of the concept of Eastern Europe in the academic scholarship on education of the 1990s. In this chapter, we will first discuss the context necessary for the analysis of this concept (this section is based on Orechova, 2023b) and then the focus will shift to the wider higher education context of Lithuania and Estonia as well as their state of internationalisation.

3.1. The concept of Central and Eastern Europe

While the concept was undoubtedly used before that, the last decade of the 20th century marks the time when the concept of Central and Eastern Europe entered (or re-entered) the discourse after the countries formerly occupied by Soviet Russia regained independence and the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, their autonomy. Generally, geography is often considered the main source of regional definitions. Conceptual historians, however, maintain that regional concepts contain also non-geographical meanings (Ifversen, 2002). Analytically, three groups of constitutive elements that are used to construct regions can be discerned: "physical and anthropogeographic conditions framing regions as 'natural formations'; structures, institutions and mentalities resulting from history/legacies/culture, which describe regions as cultural-historical spaces; and (geo)political designs and alignments, which frame regions as political concepts" (Mishkova & Trencsényi, 2017, p. 224). Regional concepts are often a focus for Transnational Conceptual History since some spatial concepts refer to units larger than a nation state; also, their conceptualization occurs not only inside the region but also outside of it. These internal and external regionalizations interact in intricate ways. There is rarely a winner in these interactions, however, they are both important to the development of the concept (Mishkova & Trencsényi, 2017).

As I have already discussed in the foreword, any kind of denotation for a country or a group of people implies a discursive choice and is, therefore, not neutral. The complexity of regional concepts is, thus, also underscored by our conception of space. Concept users tend to 'naturalize' them as they consider 'natural' space in opposition to artificial historical time. Thus, the historicity of these concepts remains hidden. If space is also perceived as a product of human perception and agency, it opens up the possibility to question the various underlying assumptions about the ‘natural’ formation of spatial concepts (Mishkova & Trencsényi, 2017).

Another trait of regional concepts is that they often do not occur individually but form complex clusters of concepts (Mishkova & Trencsényi, 2017). A case in point is the Concept of Central and Eastern Europe which forms a cluster together with the concepts of Eastern Europe and Central Europe (it could also be placed in a larger cluster including other European regional concepts, for instance). Depending on the scope of analysis, each of these could create their own cluster, as does Central Europe in an example given by Mishkova and Trencsényi (2017): throughout history the conceptual cluster of Central Europe includes Mitteleuropa, Zwischeneuropa, East Central Europe, the Masarykian ‘New Europe’, and the ‘Other Europe’. Mishkova and Trencsényi also include Central Europe among “the most paradigmatic and salient European examples of the conceptualization of ‘historical regions’” (ibid, p. 213).

It is important to note that there is an asymmetry in the regional concepts of Europe, as they are formed in different historical conditions by different actors with different purposes. The original conceptions, for instance, of Central Europe and Eastern Europe were of external origin (Mishkova & Trencsényi, 2017). Moreover, place and asymmetric relations between concepts are extremely significant for everyday understanding of European history as ideas of Europe are incorporated differently into the national history narratives across Europe (Marjanen, 2017). These asymmetric relations are well illustrated in the historical formation of the concept of Eastern Europe. Moreover, this asymmetry is also observed in contemporary discourses, where it serves to foster the positioning of the West as the normative category. As Manuela Boatcă (2017) notes, “the label of “Europe” always includes both Western Europe and its white populations, but Eastern Europe needs to be specifically mentioned in order to be included in the term” (Boatcă, 2017, p. 471).

In his seminal work “Inventing Eastern Europe” Larry Wolff (1996) discusses the construction of Eastern Europe during the Enlightenment as “a geographical domain and a philosophical idea at once” (Wolff, 1996, pp. 358–359). According to Wolff, at the time geographical notions were imbued with cultural significance and the emerging concept of ‘civilization’ became the primary measure. Due to this, the invention of Eastern Europe happened simultaneously with the invention of Western Europe as it was also the vantage point from which the invention was conducted, and the two emerged as complementary concepts capable of defining each other. Moreover, in the binary between civilization and barbarism, Eastern Europe occupied the subordinate position relative to the 'civilized' West. Wolff calls the invention of Eastern Europe "an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization" (p. 7) wherein Eastern Europe is simultaneously included and excluded, "Europe but not Europe" (ibid). Even though Eastern Europe was not the full Other as was the Orient, it was placed in an ambiguous space associated with backwardness and need for development (Wolff, 1996).

3.2. Transition and modernization in Central and Eastern Europe

> For two decades after 1989, the political philosophy of postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe could be summarized in a single imperative: Imitate the West! The process was called by different names—democratization, liberalization, enlargement, convergence, integration, Europeanization—but the goal pursued by postcommunist reformers was simple. They wished their countries to become "normal", which meant like the West. (Holmes & Krastev, 2018, p. 118)

Without doubt, the process of Central and Eastern European economic and social change, most often called 'transition' was heavily influenced by the modernization theory. The origins of the classical modernization theory reach as far back as the late 1940s. Historically and systematically, it was framed by Talcott Parsons. In his early work on post-war Germany, Parsons broadened the scope of sociological theory to include the description of the imbalances and pressures associated with modernization processes in relation to controlled social change. According to Parsons, because a society's institutional structure relies on its ability to achieve integration, structural change, even when it primarily affects the economic sphere, is inherently a sociological issue (Müller, 1995). In his later work, Parsons formulated what he called "evolutionary universals" defined as "any organizational development sufficiently important to further evolution that, rather than emerging only once, it is likely to be "hit upon" by various systems operating under different conditions" (Parsons, 1964, p. 339). The four aspects that he maintained were fundamental to the structure of the modern society were "bureaucratic organization, money and markets, a universalistic legal system, and the democratic association in both governmental and private forms" (ibid). While the evolutionary imperative received a significant amount of criticism, many modernization theorists agreed that successful social change depends on a complex balance between economic growth, non-economic orientations and integrative norms. The criticism was mostly focused on the methodological weakness of social change being explained by functional imperatives and the Eurocentrism of the norms of development (Müller, 1995).

The collapse of state communism in Central and Eastern Europe, in effect, revived modernization theory as an approach to social and economic change. As (Zapf, 1991) notes, “Modernization theory was nearly discredited – as ‘westernization’ – in the 1970s. Meanwhile, real social change as well as theoretical developments have brought about a revival of modernization theory” (p. 83). There are at least two reasons for the prevalence of modernization theory in that particular time and space, a theoretical and a practical one. The theoretical basis stems from the fact that the comparatively sudden dissolution of the Soviet Union and the failure of communist regimes in satellite states was not an expected development in the West and it created a certain theoretical vacuum. Müller (1992) states that “The upheavals in the Eastern European countries have demonstrated to the social sciences in a painful manner that they do not dispose of any adequate theory suited to grasp the dynamics and scope of the processes taking place there” (p. 109). Since Parsonian modernization theory considered that Soviet Union should eventually turn democratic along with the assumption that all societies which could broadly be considered part of the Western culture, tend to develop a universal development plan which is bound to succeed irrespective of regional and temporal opposing trends, it proved to have predicted the developments that Western sociologists have found quite surprising. The general consensus which emerged was that Eastern European societies were ‘catching up’ on the modernisation that they would have otherwise embarked on had it not been blocked by their Soviet condition (Müller, 1992).

The practical reason for the revival of modernization theory for the Eastern European context is also the main reason for its endurance up to the 1990s. Its lasting impact was not due to academic debate but rather because the assumptions upon which it was based were broadly shared by governments and international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Further, the expectations raised by the theory were transferred to the Eastern European countries with the expertise and counselling of these same international organisations (Müller, 1995). The political dimension of the modernisation theory is also present in the original Parsons’ theory itself: “it relates the politics of modernisation to a sociological concept of modern society as an epoch which – more so than any other concept – represents the self-image of Western societies and which, today, too appears to be taking on orientational functions for Eastern European countries” (Müller, 1992, p.

117). Largely due to the concept of modernization being co-opted into the economic and political governance, the meaning of modernization shifted and since the 1980s it has been understood mainly as a market-induced process which is stimulated by technological innovation and liberalised markets. It is precisely this understanding that dominated the discourse of modernity in Eastern Europe and completely eliminated the social elements of Parsons' theory (Müller, 1995).

The market-induced modernisation was coupled with economic conditions that were vastly different from those of the post-war modernisations upon which the modernization theory was developed and the safeguards that were available at the time no longer existed in the global economy of the 1990s. Müller (1992) concludes that "Eastern European reforms are confronted with risks, which were deliberately avoided during the reconstruction of Western European post-war societies" (p. 144). Müller's criticism towards the application of modernization theory to Eastern Europe stemmed from both practical and theoretical reasons which were interlinked. In terms of theory, he argued that the neo-Parsonian sociology of the late 1980s has lost its social component and has become too concerned with economics. In both the left neo-Parsonian developments (Habermas) and the right (Luhman) the economic sphere has become understood as a functionally differentiated, autonomous and amoral zone of society. In this understanding, any interference with the inherently comprehensive price system of an economy is seen as a regression toward a pre-modern state. As a result, "economically induced disparities and conflicts of interest, power relations and demands for social justice cannot, therefore, constitute problems within the framework of this artificial construction" (Müller, 1995, p. 273). In the practical realm, the rules of the global economic game had changed and the developing economies were to join a heavily interlinked but fundamentally imbalanced global market at a significant disadvantage. This, coupled with the self-regulating market approach, Müller (1992, 1995) believed, would lead to economic hardship that the countries would have to endure and, subsequently, result in significant social issues that they would be ill-equipped to deal with.

In opposition to the market-induced modernization which colloquially became known as the 'catch up modernisation', a neo-Parsonian strand of evolutionary modernization was developed (Müller, 1995). However, the conditions were all too ripe for the catch-up model to take root. It maintained that the economies and societies of Eastern Europe would have followed the same paths that the countries of the global West had in the post-war period, had their development not been stalled by the communist rule. Now that the obstacles of planned economy and communism were removed, the region had to ‘catch-up’ to the global West, that is, develop their economies and societies in ways that would make them achieve the same state of prosperity that those countries did in approximately half a century in as short a time as possible. As discussed above, the global economic organisations were interested in the rapid expansion of the global market and, thus, time was of the essence. On the other side, market-induced modernization theory was very attractive to Eastern Europe as well for several reasons. First, it played into the oriental trope of becoming like the normative ‘West’; second, it promised quick attainment of western economic standards; third, the no-interference-with-the-market dogma was extremely acceptable given that any state steering at the time was reminiscent of the dreaded state-planning practices of the Soviet era.

Moreover, even the evolutionary approach or other second-generation approaches ultimately endorsed the Western model of modernization. Blokker (2005) observed that the Western project of modernity went largely unquestioned throughout the 1990s: “In the approaches towards modernization and social change in Eastern Europe (commonly referred to as ‘transition’), (…) the normative affirmation of the Western modern project has been a diffused, but mostly unproblematized element” (p. 504). He argues that the debate on transition was altogether dominated by approaches that shared a number of assumptions: that post-communist countries will converge with Western Europe rather than diverge or remain different; that the end-state of the transition is inevitably going to take the form of a Western-type democratic market economy; attention was predominantly paid to formal, procedural institutions at the expense of issues such as national identity or culture; the communist past was overall viewed negatively (Blokker, 2005).

During the transition, the convergence logic received support from two sides. On one side, the collapse of communism effectively confirmed that only one view of modernity existed. On the other side there was the EU accession which was considered to be a necessary “external anchor” (Blokker, 2005, p. 504) for Eastern Europe. Joining the EU was considered a continuation of the modernization of the 1990s: “the impending enlargement should fundamentally enhance, and be an integral component of, delivering substantively upon the 1989 aspirations (…): moving further toward establishing genuine, robust political pluralism and a functioning market economy as rapidly as possible, thus ‘returning to Europe’” (Brabant, 2002, p. 15). The ‘returning to Europe’ trope used to describe the results of joining the EU also points to the convergence inherent in the Eastern European EU membership which, in essence, was a process of legal, institutional and political convergence (Blokker, 2005). The process of accession can also be perceived from an assimilationist point of view wherein Eastern Europe is perceived as lacking in Europeanness and the accession allows it to shed its Eastness or not-quite-Europeanness and become European (Kuus, 2004).

The discourse has, of course, slightly shifted over the past several decades. However, the narratives and processes constructed by the market-induced modernization theory had a great impact on the state and reforms of education, especially, in terms of public funding which eventually led to structural reforms. If modernization was to be understood as becoming more like the West, then this goal was unattainable both due to faulty normative assumptions that applied the logic and expectations of the 1940s and 1950s Western Europe to Central and Eastern Europe of the 1990s and presumed the teleological development of market economy and democracy. The social and economic issues caused by this process were expected, almost prophesised (Müller 1992; 1995), their consequences observed in various aspects, including the detrimental effect on long-term sustainability of democracy (Holmes & Krastev, 2018). As we will see further, the discourse of modernization, built on the market-induced modernization theory, was influential in the field of education and, especially so, with regards to internationalisation.

3.3. Higher education in Lithuania and Estonia from 1990 to 2020

This section provides an overview of the main developments that affected higher education and its internationalisation in Lithuania and Estonia. The analysis, therefore, includes the main aspects that were observed during the Soviet occupation prior to 1990 as these set the context for the changes that followed in the first decade of independence; the events of the first decade of independence and the structural and governance changes in the two systems; and the period from the 2000s' onwards which was marked by neoliberal education reforms in both countries and the ever-increasing presence of internationalisation in their higher education policy agendas.

3.3.1. The historical context

While it is most commonly referred to as the Soviet period, both Lithuania and Estonia have been occupied by the Soviet Union not once, but twice. Even though the first occupation lasted for a very short time during WWII (1940–1941) compared to the second one (1944–1990), structural changes in education were implemented already in the early 1940s. Teaching and research activities were separated into different institutions and the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences was established, thus, redefining the Humboldtian universities as centres for professional training. Academics who were deemed unsuitable for the new regime were relieved of their duties or, in cases of opposition, arrested and deported to Siberian Gulags. The process of structural change was finished by the mid-1950s and, in 1989, the Lithuanian higher education system included one university (Vilnius University, centrally funded from Moscow), one music conservatory, four academies, five institutes and one Higher Party School (Leišytė et al., 2018). The Estonian system consisted of one university (Tartu State University), four institutes and one conservatory (Saar & Roosalu, 2018).

During the Soviet period, national education systems had a rather limited degree of autonomy as all major decisions on curriculum, assessment, legislation, teacher training and educational structure were made by the central Soviet government. Both Lithuanian and Estonian general education was conducted in the national languages (Zelvys, 2015a; Stevick, 2015). Lithuanian higher education institutions maintained Lithuanian language of instruction (unlike the majority of other Soviet republics) and are considered to have been more liberal and West-oriented due to the influence and donations of Lithuanians living abroad, mainly in the United States (Zelvys, 2015a), however, all processes were controlled by the Ministries of Education in Vilnius or in Moscow. Higher education in Soviet Union was free of charge but the access to it was based on merits for the Communist party. In some periods, affiliation to it was an important or even necessary requirement. By 1990, the gross enrolment ratio in Lithuanian higher education was the highest in the Baltic states at 33.25%, compared to Latvia (24.87%) and Estonia (24.75%) (Leišytė et al., 2018).

As was often the case in the USSR, even though the official rules were the same for all soviet republics, the practical application varied due to different national political contexts. Aside from maintaining Estonian as the language of instruction, in the later period of the Soviet rule, Estonia was also "permitted to gradually develop more independent education policies" (Saar and Roosalu, 2018). The Estonian ministers of education Eisen and Gretskina were particularly praised for maintaining "a surprising degree of independence within a totalitarian state" (Stevick, 2015, p. 96). The turbulent end of the 1980s' proved fruitful for Estonian higher education institutions as well. The first private HEIs were established in 1986 (the Estonian Institute of Humanities) and in 1989 (the Estonian Business School). The same year the Council of the Tartu State University removed the word 'state' from the title and declared the university academically autonomous. By 1990, the Estonian higher education system already included one university, five specialised institutes and two private professional HEIs (Saar & Roosalu, 2018).

International higher education in the USSR was perceived first and foremost as a tool to spread its influence. According to Nefedova (2021), internationalization was considered an instrument of Sovietization which “led to a major reorganization of systems of higher education in many countries of Eastern Europe” (p. 584) as we have also illustrated with the Estonian and Lithuanian examples above. Somewhat in contrast to the Estonian ministers named above, due to the policies enacted by the Lithuanian Communist Party, rigorous limitations were imposed on those who attempted to travel to foreign countries and the same applied to incoming foreign scientists (Tõnismann, 2022).

The relationship between “Soviet” and “Russian”, especially in the occupied countries, was rather complex and ambiguous. However, certain policies of Soviet internationalization carried a clear dimension of Russification. Russian was the only language of international communication and was considered necessary for staff and students wanting to engage in international mobility (Oleksiyenko, 2023). Across the USSR, Russian was considered the primary language of science and education and in some countries, it even surpassed the national languages. A telling example is provided by Maria Yudkevich: “In Soviet times, students coming to Russian universities from Armenia or Kazakhstan were Soviet students. Since the 1990s, they have become foreign (international) students (…) At the same time, Russian was the mother tongue of many of them; the Russian culture was often their native culture” (Yudkevich, 2021, in de Wit & Merkx, 2021, p. 40). Both Kazakh and Armenian languages and cultures did exist at the time (and for centuries beforehand).

This serves to show that the complex processes of Sovietization and Russification in the Soviet-occupied countries were interwoven with internationalisation throughout the second half of the 20th century and the repercussions of that can be felt to this day. It is also in line with what Oleksiyenko (2023) observed in his analysis of WoS SSCI journals: “within the SSCI discourse, the Russian factor is manifested strongly in the internationalization of higher education, whether in the papers about Russia, or in the papers about other post-Soviet republics” (p. 4). Out of the three main themes shaping the geopolitical agenda in the internationalisation of post-Soviet higher education, two – de-Sovietization/de-Russification and English vs. Russian as foreign language of instruction – are directly related to what Oleksiyenko calls “the Russian factor” (p. 4).

The Russian factor may have been relatively limited in Lithuania and Estonia due both higher education systems maintaining instruction in national languages, and those languages being significantly different from Russian.

Yet, the Russian language and connections with Russian institutions and Russian scholars still played a crucial part in the international activities of the local scientists. As Tõnismann (2022) notes in her analysis on the internationalisation practices of the sociology researcher community in the Baltic States, at the time, working with other researchers in the scientific centres of the USSR – Moscow and Leningrad as well as Minsk – was important for the career development of an aspiring researcher. On the opposite, direct contacts with foreign scientists were limited, especially in social sciences and humanities, as the Soviet authorities considered these to be less politically important than the natural and exact sciences. In case of participation in exchange projects, participants were mostly chosen from Moscow or Kyiv, and not the Baltic States which were closer to the western border of the USSR (ibid).

The linguistic dimension was important not only in the colonizing but also in the dissenting aspect. The local languages of instruction provided certain leeway for professors in their teaching as the Russian supervisors could not understand the language of the lectures. Furthermore, both Lithuanians and Estonians are members of small linguistic communities which tend to learn several foreign languages. Since many Estonians could understand and speak Finnish and Finland had close political ties with the USSR, Estonians could easily cooperate with them and also get access to Western scholarly trends as their Finnish colleagues could share research from the West that was not available in the USSR. Lithuanians formed a parallel path to Western ideas via Poland as quite a significant number of Lithuanians could speak or read Polish (Tõnismann, 2022). This, however, implied quite a unilateral exchange. Tõnismann (2022) concludes that "internationalisation was used by different professional and institutional groups strategically (for developing research projects) as well as for promoting their work in the Soviet academic field" (para. 18). Factors such as the prominence of the university where a Lithuanian or Estonian scholar defended their degree, involvement with the Communist Party and geographical differences were decisive in whether these academics were exposed to any international contacts and to what extent these contacts could be used (ibid). The collapse of the Soviet Union and the restored independence of the two states changed many things in the higher education systems which directly influenced the state of internationalisation in the two countries.

3.3.2. Changes and developments since 1990

In March 1990 both Estonian and Lithuanian legislatures declared that the occupation of the Soviet Union was illegal. The Lithuanian legislature also declared the restoration of Lithuanian independence which led to an economic blockade by Russia during the spring and summer of 1990 and an effort by the Soviet military to topple the independent Lithuanian government on January 13, 1991. 14 people were killed during the night. The Estonian law declared a transitional phase to independence in March 1990 and formally declared independence in August 1991. Political independence and international recognition of both countries followed. By all counts, it was a comparatively peaceful revolution, however, the changes in the political, societal and economic structures of the newly independent states were vast and, in some cases, radical. While some of the changes, for example, in currency, were rather abrupt, the loosening of control brought on by Mikhail Gorbachev's rule in the late 1980s allowed the higher education sector to prepare, to an extent.

3.3.2.1. Autonomy and neoliberalism of the 1990s

Autonomy of higher education institutions was one of the key aims of the reformation of the higher education systems in both countries. It followed a common trend of de-ideologisation and decentralisation of the education systems, observed also in general education. This was observed in many post-Soviet countries which regained their independence. Generally, two paths of action where observed: returning to previous experience (in the case of Lithuania and Estonia – the Interwar period) and foreign borrowing (Zelvys, 2015a). The two paths often overlapped and certain policy actions may have been rooted in both a desire to restore an element of education prominent in the past as well as copy the trends observed in Western higher education. Higher education autonomy is one example of such.

Early signs of growing higher education autonomy in Estonia include the declaration of autonomy of Tartu University in 1989 and the establishment of private HEIs quoted above. In Lithuania, a similar example is the re-establishment of Vytautas Magnus University which was closed down by the Soviets in 1950. It was re-opened in 1989–1990 with the involvement of Lithuanian expatriates, mostly from Canada and the US. Also, by 1989 many Lithuanian HEIs were already drafting their statutes, which included a significantly higher degree of autonomy than allowed by the Soviet rule. For instance, the Vilnius University Statute was adopted by the Lithuanian legislature only three months after it declared independence from the USSR, in June 1990. The Statute included provisions such as that the University had the autonomy inscribed in the Statute and other Lithuanian laws, that it was self-governing and could independently enter into cooperation and other agreements with national or international education institutions.

The first laws governing higher education mostly institutionalised the changes of the early 1990s and granted the institutions substantial autonomy (Zelvys, 2015a; Stevick, 2015) as well as liberalised the higher education systems (Leišytė et al., 2018; Saar & Roosalu, 2018). As both countries were also transitioning from a planned economy to a market-based economy, the conditions were ripe for neoliberal discourse to permeate education. The increased aspiration for decentralisation, with any kind of state intervention perceived as a relic of the Soviet rule, was augmented by the neoliberal doctrine of diminishing the role of the state in public life (Saar & Roosalu, 2018).

3.3.2.2. System expansion and structural diversification

Extensive decentralisation led to the expansion of the higher education systems in terms of the number and types of institutions (Leišytė et al., 2018; Saar & Roosalu, 2018). In Estonia, the expansion was observed in the establishment of new private universities and professional higher education schools (already started in the late 1980s); the formation of a new sector of professional higher education (ISCED 5b) by the reorganisation of specialised secondary schools into public professional higher education schools, and the establishment of branches of foreign universities. Compared to 6 HEIs in 1988, by the academic year of 1993/1994 the Estonian higher education system already included 20 HEIs. The number grew further and merely a decade later more than doubled to 49 institutions in 2002 (ibid).

Similar trends were observed in Lithuania. The expansion was more limited in the first decade after independence and mostly consisted of non-university higher education institutions re-naming or re-establishing themselves as universities, a process aptly named "universification" by Želvys (2018). This led to the disappearance of the non-university sector (Želvys, 2018). Further expansion of the sector was stalled by established universities opposing both the establishment of non-university higher education and the establishment of private higher education institutions. The situation changed dramatically with the introduction of the new Law on Higher Education in 2000 which allowed the establishment of non-university higher education institutions, leading to the creation of a binary system of higher education. The universities were given the right to provide doctoral degrees and colleges or universities of applied sciences provided undergraduate degrees. In 1999, the first private universities gained official state recognition and a high demand for studies in management and law led to the establishment of numerous private colleges in 2000 (Leišytė et al., 2018).

The expansion in both countries was driven by two primary factors: on one hand, institutions drifted toward higher status to increase their funding and prestige; on the other, the growing numbers of students and liberal higher education policy provided a fertile ground for expansion. During the first two decades, both systems shifted from elite higher education to mass higher education (Leišytė et al., 2018; Saar & Roosalu, 2018). In Estonia, the number of students enrolled in tertiary education increased 2.4 times between 1994 and 2002. At its peak in 2011, 69,113 students were enrolled in Estonian tertiary education, which, compared to 24,768 in 1994, represents a 2.7-fold increase. In Lithuania, the number of students enrolled in tertiary education more than doubled in the period between 1994 and 2002 and further increased 1.4 times between 2002 and 2009 when the enrolment reached its peak. Compared to 1994, the enrolment in 2009 increased approximately 3 times, from 70,460 to 210,744 students. While the level of enrolment in Estonia mostly increased until 2002 and then remained stable at around 60,000–70,000 students until 2014, in Lithuania, the trajectory corresponded with the expansion of the higher education sector as the numbers steadily increased in the period from 2002 to 2009 and then started decreasing from 2010 onwards (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, n.d.).

The expansion of the systems and the mass enrolment was generally accompanied by a lack of public funding as the two countries grappled with volatile economic conditions of the 1990s and early 2000s. In both countries, the solution to the lack of funds in higher education was fee-paying students. While both had an official free-of-charge higher education policy (and the Lithuanian Constitution even included a statement that higher education was provided free of charge for qualified students), different variations of a mixed system emerged in the late 1990s (Leišytė et al., 2018; Saar & Roosalu, 2018). In Estonia, universities were allowed to admit up to 20 per cent students above the admission quota on a fee-paying basis. However, the actual number exceeded the quota and the proportion of fee-paying students increased from 7 per cent in 1993 to 54 per cent in 2004 (Saar & Roosalu, 2018). In Lithuania, a merit-based system was established with a number of study places funded by the state while others could be filled by fee-paying students. No limit was set on the number of self-funded students HEIs could accept. The share of self-funded students thus increased from 3.5% in 1995/1996 to 33.1% in 2000/2001 (Leišytė et al., 2018).

3.3.2.3. Quality assurance

This rapid increase in institutions, study programmes and student numbers in conjunction with the limited funding fostered the discussions on the quality of higher education. There were, of course, certain grounds for it as the sporadic expansion combined with the ability to collect tuition fees incentivized HEIs to lower the admission requirements to be able to accept more students (Miseliūnaitė & Vaidelytė, 2018) and created the conditions for the emergence of diploma mills (Saar & Roosalu, 2018). In many Eastern European countries, the response to the expansion of the system was to introduce quality assurance measures and the high attention paid to quality assurance is one of the most common characteristics of post-state socialist countries (Tomusk, 2000). The Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assurance was established in 1995 (Leišytė et al., 2018) and in 1996, Estonia established the Standard of Higher Education which regulated the establishment of HEIs and the introduction of new study programmes (Saar & Roosalu, 2018). In both countries, these quality assurance measures are considered to have been used as instruments to limit the expansion of the system and ensure satisfactory levels of quality, pointing to an increase in state intervention compared to the first years of independence (Leišytė et al., 2018; Saar & Roosalu, 2018).

This, however, was not the only reason for the emergence and continued sustainability of the quality discourse in Estonian and Lithuanian higher education. The first steps for quality assurance quite likely were taken in anticipation of the Bologna Declaration and corresponded to the trends observed in the European higher education field. The Council of Europe is credited with importing the Dutch quality assurance model into the former socialist states, including Estonia and Lithuania. This model generally consisted of a self-study and peer review. However, as Voldemar Tomusk (2000) observed at the turn of the millennium: “It is symptomatic for the post-totalitarian higher education that quality assurance is addressed uniquely through the process of non-voluntary accreditation. Quality assurance and accreditation are considered as synonyms” (p. 176). Indeed, differently than in the Dutch approach, in Eastern European countries the final decision concerning accreditation usually belonged to the executive branch of the government (Tomusk, 2000) and such was the case in both Lithuania and Estonia.

It is possible that partially due to its connection with the Bologna Declaration and the Council of Europe, in the region, quality assurance was presented as a significant example of catching up to the West. Thus, it became a part of the Westernization process that was heavily politically favoured at the time. In contradiction to the contextual understanding of the quality of education, in the Eastern European quality discourse, meeting international standards was understood as the main quality target for higher education. In the context of globalising higher education, which also fostered a de-contextualised view on quality, Eastern European quality discourse operated on the premise that there is “a final body of relatively stable knowledge, (…) and that this body of knowledge is already at the disposal of the leading universities of particular countries” (Tomusk, 2000, p. 182). Tomusk (2000) concludes that while interest in quality is a convenient way to legitimise various education policies, the Eastern European quality assurance mechanisms are more often than not driven by internal and external politics, the need to secure social stability or the interests of particular universities; its connection to education is relatively weak. As we will see later on, the notion of quality will remain both a prominent discursive element of both Estonian and Lithuanian higher education discourse and a tool of higher education policy legitimation.

3.3.2.4. Competition and consolidation: neoliberal reforms

The early 2000s were marked by another wave of higher education reforms. In Estonia, the growth of the system was considered too quick and too expansive and did not fully meet the expectations established in the Bologna Declaration. The reforms included in the higher education reform plan adopted in 2002 included structural changes as well as the establishment of standard of higher education, introduction of the two-cycle system, reforms of doctoral programmes (Saar & Roosalu, 2018). Meanwhile in Lithuania, the 2000 Law on Education not only established non-university higher education sector. It also institutionalised student fees based on a contract between HEIs and the Ministry of Education and Science: the costs for a number of student placements in different disciplines were covered by state funding and other students would have to pay for their studies. Since the adoption of this law, the development was limited mostly due to a lack of explicit strategic goals and priorities. Except for the tacit aim of expansion (demand for higher education was still rising) and policy rhetoric calling for more efficiency, improved quality and meeting the needs of the labour market and the society, for five years, Lithuanian higher education developed without a clear governmental higher education policy (Leišytė et al, 2018).

The trend of strategic development continued in Estonia and the government approved the Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2006–2015 in 2006. According to Saar and Roosalu (2018), the strategy addressed the four main challenges for the Estonian higher education sector: 1) the expected diminishing of students entering higher education; 2) the need to improve the international dimension of HEIs; 3) the necessity of additional funding to ensure the sustainability of the system; 4) the needs of the Estonian economy and society. The specific measures planned had a clearly neoliberal profile with a focus on quality issues, clarification of HEI profiles and the meeting of labour market demands set as an objective. It also introduced a new scheme for steering higher education via contracts with individual HEIs.

Further neoliberalisation of the sector was observed in system-level restructuring decisions in all major Estonian HEIs proposed by state actors (Saar & Roosalu, 2018). Between 2014 and 2016, three Estonian public universities underwent structural reforms in which institutes were merged, new modes of governance were introduced and curricula, redesigned. The publicly stated reasons for these reforms include improved transparency and efficiency of university management, greater accountability of faculties to the university, improvement of the education quality, greater economic sustainability and management efficiency (Aidnik, 2020). In 2015, a report commissioned by the government and compiled by a CEO in private business, who was also a member of the Research and Development Council, was published. It proposed further consolidation of HEIs as well as other major structural changes in the name of excellence and efficiency. The report was influential in Estonian policy making but it also prompted rather critical analyses of neoliberal trends in the Estonian academia (Saar & Roosalu, 2018; Aidnik, 2020).

Saar and Roosalu (2018) conclude that the developments in the Estonian higher education since 1990 have been driven by the European political agenda (this includes both general neoliberal European social agenda and the reliance on foreign experts in policy design); neoliberalism, fragmentation and the re-established intervention patterns of the Estonian political agenda; demographic processes; changes in higher education funding, qualification system and labour market structure. Authors also note that the internationalisation of education and labour markets and the resulting brain drain coupled with "the high social value of higher education and the perceived inequality of access to it" was one of the driving factors due to the pressure that lower levels of education put on the system (Saar & Roosalu, 2018, p. 167).

The watershed moment in Lithuania happened in 2009 when the new Law on Studies and Research was adopted. It legitimised all the Bologna principles and was the start of a higher education reform which changed the legal status of HEIs, the governance of universities and, crucially, the principles of higher education funding. The universities were previously governed by the Rector and a Senate comprised of elected academics. According to the new reform, partially external university boards were introduced. Most of the powers, including the right to elect the Rector, were given to the boards. Even though there were fears that the external members of the boards would impose on the universities, this element of the reform proved to not affect the life of the academic communities as much as expected (Zelvys, 2015a). The funding reform, on the other hand, significantly increased competition among the HEIs (Leišytė et al., 2018) as the funding of the institutions was tied to the number of students who chose to study there based on the principle 'money follows the student'. Competition was the explicit rationale for the reform dressed as an incentive for the universities to "make more efforts to increase the quality of the studies" (Zelvys, 2015a, p. 167).

The increased competition went together with different incentives of university mergers and the tendency for agglomeration of faculties was observed in Lithuania as well (Leišytė et al., 2018). The process, however, was not straightforward and few HEIs actually merged. The impetus for structural reform came in 2009, when during the reform mentioned above, evaluations performed by international experts spoke of a need to consolidate the resources and potential for studies and research. The first merger happened soon afterwards, in 2010, when the Lithuanian Veterinary Academy was merged with Kaunas Medical University creating the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences. Even though a consolidation plan was published in 2011 which envisioned re-organisation of nearly all Lithuanian universities into big universal institutions with the aims of increased competition, efficiency of use of funds and improved quality (Bružienė, 2019), the actual level of re-organisation remained limited for a significant period of time. In recent years, two relatively big mergers included merging smaller universities with either Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) or Vilnius University (VU). In 2019, Lithuanian University of Education was reorganised into the Education Academy of VMU, and Aleksandras Stulginskis University (formerly known as the Lithuanian Agriculture Academy) was reorganised into the Agriculture Academy of VMU. In 2021, Šiauliai University was merged with Vilnius University and became the Šiauliai Academy of VU.

A crucial and distinctive element in the development of Lithuanian higher education post-1990 was the extremely influential lobbying from University rectors and college directors which were observed, for instance, in the successful opposition to the establishment of private universities (Leišytė et al., 2018) and which, it stands to reason, was also more active in the face of possible consolidation. This is also supported by the fact that, at least so far, the mergers have mostly consisted of bigger, more established universities encompassing smaller ones (for a more elaborate discussion on university mergers in Lithuania, see Bružienė, 2025).

The first decade of independence was more similar in the two countries, however, the latest developments show certain divergence. While higher education in Estonia (provided in Estonian) has been free of charge since 2013, Lithuania still has a mixed system of study vouchers with self-funded students comprising a significant number in HEIs. Neoliberalisation of higher education is also more prominent in Estonia with even the universities establishing themselves as advocates for neoliberal futures (Aavik, 2019). The size and tradition-based lobbying power of the Lithuanian higher education sector may partially explain the comparative resilience of the Lithuanian HEIs. However, what we now perceive as resilience may yet prove to be temporary and could just be a delay due to the lack of strategic involvement by the Lithuanian government in the later period when the Estonian government was more active, particularly in setting strategic goals for the higher education sector.

3.4. Higher education internationalisation in Lithuania and Estonia

Internationalisation is yet another example of the relative divergence discussed above. Even though the starting positions in the 1990s were not vastly different, Estonia is now considered a success story of higher education internationalisation (de Wit et al., 2019; Rose & Leišytė, 2016) and Lithuania is not really a part of the conversation. In 2018, all 7 (6 public and 1 private) Estonian universities were considered to have a high level of international activity (Saar & Roosalu, 2018). Compared to Estonia, Lithuanian higher education seems to be dragging its feet a little. Even though Lithuania has a larger and more varied university sector, out of 10 private and public universities, 5 were considered to have high or moderately high level of international activity (Leišytė et al., 2018). In the following section we shall discuss the state of higher education internationalisation in the two countries with a focus on international students and staff, international curriculum and the strategic development of internationalisation in the two countries.

International students and staff

The success of Estonian internationalisation (at least, success the way it is measured) is confirmed by the steadily growing numbers of international students and staff. In 2013, the share of international students in Estonia in all tertiary education was 2.895% with the share at doctoral level even higher (7.162%). By 2021, the share of international students across all levels of tertiary education rose to 11.625% and at doctoral level, to 29.089%. The increase in both measures is more than twofold compared to 2013. In real terms, at least 1 out of every 10 Estonian students is international and so is close to every third doctoral student (OECD, 2022). In Lithuania, however, the growth is not as remarkable. In 2013, the share of international students was very similar to Estonia's, at 2.452%. At doctoral level, the share was already significantly smaller than Estonia's, 2.76%. By 2021, the overall share of international students in Lithuanian tertiary education was 7.329%. The number at doctoral level remained similar to the overall number and in 2021 amounted to 7.82%. A significant growth was only observed at the master level where the share increased from 3.2% in 2013 to 13.631% in 2021 (OECD, 2022).

The OECD data also includes internationally mobile national students who return to their country of origin. If these students are removed, as in the Eurostat data, the share of mobile degree students in 2021 is 7.4% and 3.5% in Estonia and Lithuania respectively. The biggest growth observed for this metric for Lithuania is from 1.2% in 2013 to 4.4% in 2022; for Estonia the steady growth from 1.8% in 2013 to 8.1% in 2020 is observed. This shows that the share of mobile degree students rose unequally in the two countries and in Lithuania only doubled in a decade, while in Estonia, the increase was over 4 times in a comparable period. There are certain interesting trends forming in the period after 2020. The Estonian share has slightly decreased in both 2021 and 2022 compared to 2020, and the Lithuanian has increased (Eurostat, 2024a). This period, however, is very recent and quite tumultuous in the region, therefore, it is still early to draw any kind of conclusions. It is quite likely, however, that Russia's war on Ukraine as well as the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the patterns of international mobility in both countries.

The availability of data for international staff is limited, however, it also shows similar trends. The number for researchers employed in the higher education sector in Estonia who do not have an Estonian citizenship has grown from 94 in 2007 to 359 in 2021. The growth has been largely steady, aside from a slight dip in 2015 and 2016 (191 and 194 respectively compared to 208 in 2013 and 227 in 2017). The only data available for Lithuania is from 2007 when the number was 23 to 2012 when it reached 86 which is still lower than the Estonian one in 2007 (Eurostat, 2024b). No further data is available because all foreign nationals who have registered for residence in Lithuania are not considered foreigners in the collection of statistical data.

However, Rose and Leišytė (2016) show that the Estonian higher education sector has experienced a larger increase in the numbers of international staff than Lithuanian. Nonetheless, according to their analysis, both countries failed to clearly articulate and prioritise the issue of international staff recruitment, even though the authors considered this one of the main issues to ensure the quality and survival of the two education systems. A case study of Vilnius University showed that the vast majority of international staff came to the university due to personal motivations and connections to the country as well as better career opportunities. Low salaries, language barriers and bureaucratic burdens were cited as the main issues for international staff. The authors attribute the differences in the two countries and Estonia's relative success in international staff recruitment to the fact that compared to Lithuania "where clear strategies are lacking at both national and institutional levels – Estonia has issued clear national strategies for internationalization and an obligation for all public universities to implement institutional policies for attracting and integrating international students and academic staff" (p. 122).

Research shows that expatriates in both Lithuania and Estonia consider themselves well-adjusted and no country differences concerning the factors of adjustment were observed. The research participants from both countries list issues such lower salaries, limited support structures, lack of information before and upon arrival as well as the bureaucratic hurdles mentioned above. Somewhat contrary to the findings of Rose and Leišytė (2016), most participants did not experience language issues since locals were willing to communicate in a foreign language (usually English or Russian). This, however, limited their opportunities to use the local language and posed a challenge to learn it. The language barriers were also encountered in terms of access to practical information as the local language websites contained more information than their English versions. The authors conclude that as Lithuania and Estonia transition from expatriate-sending to expatriate-receiving nations, there is still room for improvement at the organisational and country levels to meet the needs of the incoming expatriates (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al., 2024).

International curricula

In terms of international curricula, the easily quantifiable and comparable measure is the number of foreign-language study programmes. The information portal for prospective international students *Study in Lithuania* lists 259 Bachelor's level study programmes provided by both universities and colleges in English, German or Russian, 187 Master's level study programmes and 40 study programmes at Doctoral level (Study in Lithuania, n.d.). The Estonian counterpart *Study in Estonia* lists a significantly more moderate 28 Bachelor's study programmes, 78 Master's study programmes and 90 accredited PhD study programmes in 7 higher education institutions (Study in Estonia, n.d.). These differences can be attributed to the fact that the Estonian higher education sector is significantly more consolidated and a smaller number of institutions and departments naturally leads to a smaller number of programmes. Moreover, there is a clear orientation towards attracting a higher share of doctoral students in Estonia. In Lithuania, as we have seen from the statistics on international students quoted above, the focus (intentionally or not) is on Master's level study programmes. The exceptionally high number of Bachelor's study programmes on offer in Lithuania is largely due to a high number of colleges offering study programmes in foreign languages (they offer around 40% (107 out of 259) of all Bachelor's study programmes provided in foreign languages). The attempts to consolidate the Lithuanian colleges are currently underway, however, the results of these attempts have been limited as of yet.

Strategic development

The last education strategy in Lithuania was adopted in 2003 for the period from 2003 to 2012. In lieu of a comprehensive strategy, Lithuanian higher education policies have been set out in state programmes on education development: the State Programme on the Development of Studies, Research and Experimental (Social, Cultural) Development for 2013–2020 and the Programme on Education Development for 2021–2030. Several types of documents have been developed over the years where national higher education internationalisation policies are established. From 2008 to 2012, internationalisation policies were established biannually in higher education internationalisation programmes, then The Higher Education Internationalisation Action Plan for 2013–2016 was adopted. Since 2017, internationalisation policies are set out annually in ministerial decrees on the Priorities of Promoting Internationalisation in Higher Education developed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports.

The 2008–2010 Internationalisation Programme (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, 2008) is a comparatively comprehensive document which includes an overview of the global and European environment and the various factors that should encourage the internationalisation of Lithuanian higher education institutions. The main incentive is formulated as the ability to integrate into the European Higher Education Area. Multiple references are made to the documents of Bologna Process. In particular, the Bergen and London communiques are quoted as stating that the expansion of internationality is one of the key instruments for improving the quality of higher education and research. The guidelines for the development of internationalisation listed in the programme include a stronger role for the state in promoting internationalisation, setting priorities for Lithuania's international cooperation in higher education, alignment of the higher education system with the Bologna process, improvement of the system for state-supported student loans, support to emigrant Lithuanian citizens, development of modern methods and forms of education, strengthening of foreign language skills, participation in the development of transnational higher education and improved development of the international dissemination of Lithuanian higher education. The objectives set out for the period from 2008 to 2010 are listed as:

> 17.1. improve the content and methods of studies in order to increase the competitiveness of Lithuanian higher education in the European and global higher education system;
> 17.2. promote the alignment of the Lithuanian higher education system with the general trends in the development of European higher education;
> 17.3. increase the volume and quality of international student and faculty exchanges;
> 17.4. promote international academic partnerships between higher education institutions;
> 17.5. provide conditions for the development of the competence of teaching staff;
> 17.6. improve the dissemination of information about Lithuanian higher education and to contribute to the creation of an attractive image of Lithuanian higher education in Europe and worldwide. (p. 7)

The programme is quite comprehensive itself, however, the objectives are quite narrow and comparatively vague, given that two of them are formulated as promotion. The biggest conundrum is located in the fact that the programme is developed and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science, however, the vast majority of activities (save for the dissemination) directly depend on the involvement of higher education institutions. The adoption of the document is still commendable as it both delineates the aspirations and allocates the financial resources attached to the listed activities. The same framework is maintained in the 2011–2012 Programme (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerija, 2011) (with the inclusion of the development of Lithuanian studies (Baltic studies) abroad under the banner of internationalisation and an increased focus on diaspora communities and Lithuanian researchers working abroad. The Action Plan for 2013–2016 ((Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerija, 2013) is the most long-term document and it is again quite comprehensive in setting objectives for the entire period. The purpose of the Plan is formulated as “identify the main directions for the promotion of the internationalisation of higher education in order to increase the quality of higher education, the competitiveness of higher education institutions, the development of Lithuanian (Baltic) studies abroad and to strengthen the maintenance of relations with foreigners of Lithuanian descent and the diaspora" (p. 1). The Plan also introduces the section on priorities for internationalisation which lists the aspects formerly described as directions or guidelines.

Ever since 2017, the priorities take centre stage as the national internationalisation policy is set in the annual Priorities of Promoting Internationalisation. These are more policy than strategy documents, and the formulated aims are rather vague. The priorities follow a similar pattern from 2017 to 2021. For instance, the five groups of priorities for 2017–2018 include improving the quality of internationalisation in Lithuanian higher education, strengthening academic links and inbound academic mobility by attracting talented foreign students and teachers who can bring about innovative changes in the study process, improving outgoing academic mobility, encouraging the development of Lithuanian Studies (Baltic Studies) Centres abroad, and supporting Lithuanians abroad (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerija, 2017); in the priorities for 2021–2022, an additional group of priorities on Lithuania's participation in the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area is added. The main developments in the recent document include the explicit inclusion of internationalisation of research as well as a focus on higher education institution networking (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministerija, 2021).

While in earlier documents international activities are related to the study process, the priorities for 2021–2022 systematically include research activities and researchers alongside the teaching process and university teachers in all priority areas. For instance, the priorities for 2017–2018 included support for Lithuanians living abroad who chose to study in Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerija, 2017). The priorities for 2021–2022 also include a provision to "promote links between scientists living abroad and those living in Lithuania by awarding research prizes to foreign Lithuanians for scientific achievements of a high international standard and cooperation with Lithuania" (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministerija, 2021, p. 3). Aside from these changes, the priorities for 2017–2018, 2019–2020, and 2020–2021 do not differ substantially. These documents, however, do not include measured objectives and no specific funds are allocated to the different activities. This is in line with conclusions of researchers that internationalisation has been an influence on the Lithuanian higher education policy agenda since the accession to the European Union when soon thereafter Structural Funds became available. Due to diminishing student numbers and increasing competition among the relatively large higher education sector, internationalisation is one of the ways for universities to strengthen their market position. However, the extent to which universities embrace internationalisation differs significantly across the sector (Leišytė et al., 2018).

The strategic development of Estonian higher education internationalisation could hardly be more different. The first internationalisation strategy for University of Tartu was adopted even before the national strategy, in 2004. In 2006, the Estonian Higher Education Strategy, 2006–2015 was adopted which already includes internationalisation as one of its action lines. The following goals are formulated for 2014: “3% of permanent teaching staff positions to foreigners; a scholarship for all Estonian Doctoral students of at least one semester in a foreign university; 10% foreign Doctoral students and post-doctoral students in Estonian universities; 5% of Master’s study students to receive a state scholarship for study at a foreign university; state support for 3% of first level students for participation in EU mobility programmes; number of foreign students: 3000” (p. 9). Moreover, internationalisation is conceived of as one of the main principles of higher education development: “The development of the Estonian higher education system must support Estonia’s socio-economic development and increase its competitiveness and capability for international cooperation, simultaneously guaranteeing Estonia’s continued national existence” (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, p. 2).

The Estonian Higher Education Internationalisation Strategy was adopted in 2007 as a sub-document of the higher education strategy. Its defined objectives included to make the system more competitive within the region, to make it more open for international staff and students by creating adequate legal and institutional tools, and to increase the international visibility of Estonian higher education (Matei & Iwinska, 2015). The performance targets for 2015 included 4.5% of Estonian students taking part in international exchange, 2000 international students enrolled full-time in Estonian HEIs, the number of annual state-funded doctoral students increased to 300, 10% of annual doctoral graduates being foreign nationals, all doctoral graduates having spent at least one semester abroad, at least 3% of full-time academic staff of foreign origin, and 5 to 7 state-supported foreign language study programmes developed. By 2015, the majority of these targets were met (de Wit et al., 2019). One of the main elements of this success is considered the involvement of HEIs thanks to the Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonian Higher Education Institutions (which is one of the sources in this study), signed by the Rectors’ Conference, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Archimedes Foundation[1] in 2007 (Matei & Iwinska, 2015). With regards to the Higher Education Internationalisation Strategy 2006–2015, international researchers conclude that "while not necessarily adopting a comprehensive approach to tertiary education internationalization, the case of Estonia is a good practice example of setting ambitious performance targets to measure progress with regard to internationalization goals" (de Wit et al., 2019, p. 15).

After the 2006–2015 internationalisation strategy had run its course, a more explicit shift towards the marketing of Estonian higher education happened at the strategic level as both International Marketing Strategy of Estonian Higher Education 2015–2020[2] (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2015) and Estonian Research International Marketing Strategy 2016–2022 (Estonian Research Council, 2016) were adopted. Both strategies are, in essence, implementation strategies as the objectives are defined as "to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the competitiveness agenda "Estonia 2020" and the Lifelong Learning Strategy" (p. 5) and "to contribute towards the execution of the 'Estonia is active and visible in terms of international RDI cooperation' sub-objective of the Estonian Research and Development and Innovation Strategy 2014–2020, 'A knowledge-based Estonia'" (p.3). The two strategic documents are perceived to work in tandem to achieve the overarching goals of the national strategy. The need for a high degree of integration among different sectors and stakeholders is underscored in the reference to the evaluation of the previous internationalisation strategy which has shown that

> reaching the next level of quality in the internationalisation of higher education requires agreement at the highest level of national policy making. Although the Competitiveness agenda Estonia 2020 presents internationalisation of higher education as one of the government's main lines of action, it would require a much more strategic approach than hitherto, addressing internationalisation in a comprehensive way,

[1] Archimedes foundation was the body responsible for organising internationalisation development in Estonia and was described an intermediary organisation which has "government support but benefits from the operational flexibility of an NGO" (Matei & Iwinska, p. 218). It was later reformed into Study in Estonia.

[2] No official translation of the Strategy into English has been published. In English-medium contexts, it is more often referred to in the name stated above, however, it is sometimes translated as the Estonian Higher Education Internationalisation Strategy for 2015–2020 (most notably, in the official English text of the Estonian Research International Marketing Strategy 2016–2022).

> rather than in individual, fragmented actions. (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, p. 9)

The strategic focus in these documents is on the growth of the number of international students and researcher cooperation and the positioning of Estonia as an attractive destination for higher education and research. Two indicators are set for 2020 in the International Marketing Strategy of Estonian Higher Education 2015–2020: 10% share of foreign students among all tertiary level students and 30% of foreign Master's and doctoral graduates are employed in Estonia after graduation. The objectives for the Estonian Research International Marketing Strategy 2016–2022 include a global reputation of an attractive research country, internationally available and up-to-date information on Estonian research and increased awareness for international businesses which operate in the smart specialisation growth areas on Estonian RDI achievements and success stories of cooperation between enterprises and researchers. Both groups of indicators also underscore another shift in thinking about internationalisation and higher education in Estonia, which is an increased cooperation and involvement with the business sector. A notable distinction from the earlier internationalisation goals is the explicit interest of Estonia to ensure that it does not remain merely a provider of higher education and focus on the employment of international graduates in Estonia. The goals of attracting international students have partially morphed into attracting future employees. This also shows that higher education internationalisation in Estonia has become a part of a broader strategy and vision of how the country is expected to develop in the future. While a new strategy was still being prepared in 2023, by then the first indicator had been achieved as international students made up 11% of the student body in Estonia (Loonurm, 2023).

Research findings

In as much as higher education internationalisation has been researched in the two countries, the conclusions drawn in the research reflect the situation discussed above. Tamtik and Kirss (2015) argue that the process of national internationalisation policy in Estonia has resulted in internationalisation becoming a norm in higher education. The process of norm-building started with the national political rationales driven by the government wishing to accomplish political and financial goals. However, according to Tamtik and Kirss, there was little public debate about the broader goals and implications of internationalisation and the topic disappeared from the political debate altogether after the initial stages of the norm-building. The primary rationales where then replaced with "academic rationales in the form of increasing institutional legitimacy" (p. 178). The wider public support was accrued via the social rationale wherein internationalisation became associated with tolerance, diversity, and social cohesion. The authors argue that the process resulted in international activities becoming "a conformity, an accepted standard, with formalized institutional operations in place and focus on quality over quantity" (p. 179). More recent research also concurs that internationalisation has become a prominent element of the institutional strategies of Estonian universities, so much so that the three largest public universities have explicitly stated in their strategic plans that the universities shall be international (Aavik, 2019).

With regards to internationalisation in Lithuania, Bulajeva (2013) showed that the implementation of Lithuania's higher education internationalisation policy is facing the same challenges of other small countries (tough competition for attracting international teachers and students, complicated engagement in mobility activities of study programmes and institutions), and both competition and cooperation strategies are used to solve these challenges. Bulajeva and Hogan-Brun (2014) analysed the strategic documents on higher education internationalisation in Lithuania for 2009–2012 as well as the 2001–2011 EU mobility statistics. Their research was focused on the challenges faced by Lithuania in implementing "Western-mediated" (p. 328) higher education internationalisation processes. Since gaining independence, Lithuania has traditionally followed an ethnocentric approach to language and education policies with the aim to preserve the language after the Russification experience of the Soviet occupation. The authors argue that joining the EU and signing the Bologna Declaration have prompted shifts in Lithuania's higher education internationalisation policies, leading to dilemmas in balancing Euro-centric and global influences (promotion of multilingualism) with the promotion and preservation of national culture and language. They maintain that the objectives set out in the Programme for the Promotion of Internationalisation in Higher Education for 2011–2012 aimed at supporting Lithuanian (Baltic) studies centres is one of the methods chosen to "resolve existing language policy dilemmas in promoting internationalisation and international cooperation whilst also continuing with the national project to strengthen the Lithuanian language and culture" (p. 327). In their analysis of the discourses on language in Estonian higher education, Soler and Vihman (2018) also note the need for Estonian universities to engage and mediate two conflicting language discourses: "the need to protect, promote, and develop the national language in all scientific fields (the nationalising discourse), (…), and the need to incorporate and make use of foreign languages (especially English) in an increasing number of scientific fields (the globalising discourse)" (p. 34).

The issues of language vis-á-vis internationalisation feature quite prominently in comparative research on several or all Baltic States (aside from the works quoted below, see also Soler (2020) for an analysis of the role of language in university branding and internationalisation of higher education in the Baltic States). This is supported by Kibbermann's (2017) conclusion that in both Latvia and Estonia, internationalisation is perceived to fill a demographic gap left by the diminishing numbers of local students. Therefore, both countries relate internationalisation mostly to foreign-medium instruction. A comparative analysis of the language policies and internationalisation of the three Baltic States by Kaša and Ait Si Mhamed (2013) already shows that 'foreign' almost exclusively means 'English'. Even though only in Estonia there was an explicit governmental policy of offering graduate-level study programs in English and Latvia and Lithuania only offered public support for study programs emerging as a result of cooperation between local and foreign HEIs (typically from other EU countries), English dominated in the study programs of international orientation in Latvia and Lithuania as well.

This paradigm is further supported in Soler's (2019) research of the Estonian case. Even though in the Estonian language policy documents related to internationalisation, the term 'foreign languages' is frequently used, when the use of this label was discussed in several interviews, all the informants maintained that this was "a euphemism to avoid referring to English explicitly" (p. 111). One of the informants, who used to work as a university administrator at the time some of the documents were developed, elaborated that "the use of the 'foreign languages' label was "definitely a deliberate decision", but something that at first was intended to truly capture a multilingual goal of many within the university management" (ibid). With time that, however, also changed.

In effect, there was hardly any competition for English as the language of internationalisation. Despite the existence of a potential market for international students in the formerly Soviet space, study programmes in Russian in the Baltic States were only seen to cater to local Russian-speaking populations and were not internationally oriented (Kaša & Ait Si Mhamed, 2013). Soler (2019) analysed the presence of foreign languages in the physical and online spaces at University of Tartu, University of Latvia, and Vilnius University and observed that Russian is effectively absent from these spaces. The author concludes that

> not including Russian in their physical and online spaces might imply a *de facto* lack of recognition of the language and a de-legitimisation of its presence and use by the university, implicitly acknowledging a

> language hierarchy by which institutions are to function first and foremost in the national language, and secondly, in English, with Russian having an almost symbolic position only in UT and UL. (p. 54)

At least a partial explanation is provided by the fact that Russian still carries an oppressive connotation in the Baltic states, particularly when it is considered as a language of instruction. This is succinctly illustrated in an example provided by Soler and Vihman (2018). Some of the commentators in a public discussion on language issues at Tartu university "noted an often-voiced idea that for many decades, Estonians had managed to resist Russification, while now they apparently embrace Englishisation willingly and without strong opposition" (p. 36). Another, a less loaded reason, is also references in Soler's (2019) research: even if potential international Russian-speaking students were a target group for University of Tartu, those students would want to come to Estonia to study in English, not in Russian.

The role and facets of internationalisation in Estonia is not only questioned in terms of the possible detrimental effects on the development of the national scientific language and terminology as well as the potential threat of the "Englishisation" of the general society. Aavik (2019) argues that Estonian universities themselves actively participate and co-create the increasing neoliberalisation of higher education. The author maintains that the key elements that manifest the logic and language of neoliberalism in the strategic plans of Estonian universities is internationalisation, excellence and competition, and the enterprising university, all of which are intertwined and reinforce each other. Aidnik (2020) goes further to argue that recent Estonian reforms, conducted under the auspices of improved competition, achieving excellence and meeting the needs of the society have rather led to a "decline of the university as a public and non-utilitarian institution" (p. 969) and limited opportunities to undertake independent, critical research.

Even though critical studies on Estonian higher education are considered scarce (Aidnik, 2020), the neoliberal aspects of internationalisation remain largely unquestioned in the Lithuanian context. A notable exception is Urbanovič, Wilkins and Huisman's (2016) analysis wherein the authors discuss the neoliberal underpinnings of the shift in internationalisation rationales from social and cultural to economic. Their research also shows that neoliberal ideology is considered part and parcel of Lithuanian higher education: "All of the respondents holding positions in a government office or in a higher education institution believed that the marketization of Lithuanian higher education was inevitable once the country gained independence in 1990 and started to reform its broader economy according to neo-liberal principles" (p. 496). Those in government positions also agreed that the marketization had a positive effect on the efficiency and international competitiveness of HEIs. In contrast, the lecturers who participated in the research agreed that the market approach which turn students into customers has had detrimental effects on quality. This was in part due to the students' belief that them paying for the studies made them guaranteed for a degree regardless of their effort and results and the fact that when income is based on student fees, the pressure on teaching staff to maintain high retention rates rises, thus, leading to inflated grades of the students.

However, a number of articles on Lithuanian internationalisation follow the assumption that internationalisation inherently (naturally, automatically) leads to quality (for instance, (Sumskaite & Juknyte-Petreikiene, 2016; Zuzeviciute, Praneviciene, Simanaviciene, & Vasiliauskiene, 2019). This serves to show that quality had become a particularly strong discursive element in the Lithuanian higher education discourse. My own research (Orechova, 2023a) based on data from three focus groups in a Lithuanian university which was in the process of developing internationalisation guidelines also showed that the personal understanding of internationalisation was intrinsically linked to the rationales the informants gave for why they believed they needed internationalisation. Most participants perceived internationalisation as an instrument to achieve something, be it related to funding, improved quality of education, prestige, or labour market requirements. I conclude that internationalisation of curriculum, of teaching and learning in the particular university context gets subverted into discussions of quality which is presupposed for anything international. There is a palpable disconnect between what internationalisation is believed (or hoped) to be and what it actually becomes.

This study, thus, follows my own work and that of many others in attempting to unravel the multiple complexities and intricacies of internationalisation. Even though the paths of internationalisation of Estonia and Lithuania, the two countries under closer inspection, have diverged in the past several decades, the differences in implementation do not necessarily (though, it might) mean differences in the conceptual development. In the further analysis, the 1990–2000 period tackles the conceptual development of internationalisation in (Central and) Eastern Europe as well as its mirroring process, the conceptual development of Central and Eastern Europe in the field of international education, and the study of the 2000–2020 period focuses exclusively on Estonia and Lithuania. The following chapter details the methodological decisions and choices made regarding the research design of the study, including the collection and selection of data sources and the methods for their analysis.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study sets forward a somewhat ambitious methodological aim of combining Conceptual History and Critical Discourse studies. Here, I would like to stress again that neither Conceptual History nor Discourse-Historical Approach is a method in and of itself; these are methodological approaches which employ a vast array of methods. Nonetheless, the research design largely follows the guidelines of the Discourse-Historical Approach, especially in the primary stages of the study. In the following chapter, we shall discuss the overall research design and the specific procedures for data collection, selection and analysis.

4.1. Research aims and the methodological framework of the study

In this study I aim to investigate the concept of higher education internationalisation in Eastern Europe (Lithuania and Estonia) in terms of its historical development and its implications. The study is conducted in an abductive manner and departs from the following hypotheses formulated during the initial stages of research:

1) internationalisation in Eastern Europe is a borrowed concept: on one hand, it has been used in the USSR but had a different conceptual load; on the other, it came from 'the West' with the education reforms and expectations of the 1990s;
2) internationalisation is a neoliberal operationalising concept which was introduced to the region during the 'transformation period' together with the push of economic reforms and, thus, was imbued with an economic logic further strengthened by the neoliberal education reforms of the 2000s;
3) internationalisation is a temporal future-oriented concept which is used to legitimise policy goals and operationalise higher education discourses (e.g., quality);
4) internationalisation is a tool that Eastern European universities use to bring themselves closer to 'the West', conceptualised as the norm, and further from 'the East', conceptualised as the Other.

While hypotheses might be slightly less common in qualitative research, in Conceptual History they are understood not as assumptions to be tested but rather as heuristic anticipations which guide the exploration of the concept (Bödeker, 1998). In this sense, the arrival of the concept in 1990 dictates the starting point of the research and implies the selection of data available from the year 1990. The importance of neoliberal reforms in the region under study suggests that the interrogation should continue throughout the 2000s. The hypotheses also underline the importance of higher education institutions, therefore, the data collected should be as closely related to them as possible. In terms of data analysis, the hypotheses imply a multilayered investigation of the concept and its discursive use in order to elaborate on its qualities and the ways it is operationalised.

Epistemologically, the study aligns with social constructionism, in which both discourses and concepts are understood as the products of jointly constructed meanings. In terms of theory, we depart from Conceptual History and construct our research with the purpose to track the development of the concept of internationalisation rather than the discourses of internationalisation. However, we see the concept of internationalisation embedded in the wider discursive architecture of higher education and, therefore, aim to complement the methodological approach of Conceptual History with the procedures provided by the Discourse-Historical Approach. This is in line with Kosseleck's idea that the history of concepts and the history of discourse is mutually related: "Each depends inescapably on the other. A discourse requires basic concepts in order to express what it is talking about. An analysis of concepts requires command of both linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts, including those provided by discourses" (as cited in Bödeker, 1998, p. 64).

The fundamental aim is to investigate the development of the concept of higher education internationalisation in two Eastern European countries, Estonia and Lithuania, from 1990 to 2020. In comparing the semantic fields of internationalisation in different periods of time we purport to show what has changed and what has remained the same in the conceptual architecture of internationalisation. Moreover, we strive to position these conceptual changes and movements in the wider discursive architecture of Eastern European higher education. Aside from the practical reasons for the limited scope of the research, the two countries were chosen with the explicit purpose to limit the temporal and spatial frame of the concept under investigation (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). The similar sociohistorical and higher education context of the two countries (discussed in more detail in the previous chapter) allows to consider them in the same spatial frame.

The potentially unexpected exclusion of the third Baltic state, Latvia, is deliberate. Estonia was selected as a case exemplifying notable progress in internationalisation, whereas Lithuania serves as a more typical example within the regional context. Latvia also falls into the second group, therefore, was not expected to substantially extend the analytical scope of the study, and was not included. Moreover, as the space under investigation is Eastern

Europe and a portion of the data is related to other countries in the region, the focus on all three Baltic states could potentially necessitate an interrogation of another regional concept, which, presumably, is not related to the development of the concept of internationalisation to the extent that the concept of Eastern Europe is.

The temporal frame of 1990 to 2020, which is analytically divided into 1990–2000 and 2000–2020, was largely dictated by the concept under investigation. Internationalisation, as it is used now, emerged in the discourse of Eastern European higher education after the region regained its independence and higher education institutions had at least the theoretical capacity to internationalise. While the statehood issues were fully resolved only in 1991, the discussions on possible developments with regards to Eastern European higher education were taking place already in 1990, at least on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The cut-off date for the research was based on the fact that the empirical analysis was conducted in 2021–2022, and the inclusion of very recent data seemed imprudent. In addition, the internationalisation discourse of the 2020s was dominated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; although interesting, this aspect had the potential to derail the study into a disproportionate focus on the issue.

Since conceptual meanings cannot be chronologically listed but rather co-exist, overlap or even oppose one another, their internal synchronic structure is multilayered. This multilayered synchronic structure informs and aggregates into the diachronic development of the concept. In order to elaborate upon and, in a way, unravel this multilayered structure, the research comprises multiple analyses of the concept of internationalisation. The study consists of three sections of research which are conducted separately in accordance with the theoretical and methodological approach discussed in Chapter 1 of the thesis, and then analysed together to reach the research aims quoted above. Section 1 is devoted to the analysis of the concept of internationalisation in the period from 2000 to 2020. It encompasses an analysis of policy documents produced by the universities during this time frame as well as focus group data, collected in one of the universities in 2018. In Section 2, the concept of internationalisation is analysed in a different corpus which consists of academic articles available in international research databases on higher education in Eastern Europe published between 1990 and 2000. In Section 3, the research focus shifts to the concept of Central and Eastern Europe as it proved to be salient during the analysis conducted in Section 2. This corpus consists of academic research articles published internationally in the field of education between 1990 and 2000 that mention the concept of Central and Eastern Europe in any of its linguistic variations.

The procedures of data collection and selection were conducted separately for all three sections but they followed the same framework. The procedures are described in more detail in the following section of this chapter.

The three types of data were analysed abductively, that is, in reflection of both previous research and the other sections of this study. Chronologically, the first stage of analysis consisted of preliminary analyses of the data: the analysis of University-made texts was followed by the analysis of the focus group data and, later, the analysis of the research publications. In the second stage of the analysis, the data was interrogated again, with the specific aim of developing a semantic field of internationalisation based on the specific segment of data. The third stage of analysis tracks the development of the concept by adding the chronological element to the semantic fields and focusing on the changes in the conceptual architecture of internationalisation. In combining the two approaches (Discourse-Historical Approach and Conceptual History) we do not stop at placing internationalisation among other concepts and examining its synchronic and diachronic development. We also aim to interrogate in what specific discursive frames internationalisation is invoked and to what aim. To achieve this objective, we lean more heavily into the DHA and analyse specific formulations of phrases, use of metaphors, rhetoric strategies and instances of re-contextualisation.

In general terms, the data collection and selection was informed mostly by DHA, and a thematic analysis was employed during stage 1. Stage 2 relied on the method of close reading used in Conceptual History, however, the analysis of rhetoric devices, especially, the strategy of nominalisation, used in DHA, was also prominent in establishing what other concepts are connected to internationalisation. In Stage 3, a meta-analysis of the results of the previous two stages was conducted with reference to the contextual analysis provided in Chapter 3. The different procedures will now be discussed in more detail. In light of the findings and the chronological relationship between the three sections, in this chapter they are discussed in the order the research was conducted – from the newest to the oldest data and from the focus on internationalisation to the focus on Central and Eastern Europe. In the following chapter of the thesis, the research results are presented in an inverted order and respect the chronology of historical time rather than the sequence of how research was conducted to allow for better contextualization and elaboration of the results.

4.2. Data collection and selection: building a corpus

In the present study, the general structure of a research conducted according to the discourse-historical approach (DHA) of CDS has been consulted as a guide for data collection and selection procedures. However, there is no accepted cannon in data collection procedures in CDS and most approaches do not explicitly refer to any particular data sampling procedure. In DHA, a range of empirical data may be collected (depending on availability and scope of the research) in consideration of the following criteria: 1) specific political units or language communities, 2) specific periods of time relating to important discursive events, 3) specific social (especially, political and scientific) actors (individual actors and/or organizations), 4) specific discourses, 5) specific fields of political action, 6) specific semiotic media and genres relating to the issue under investigation (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). Triangulation of data is achieved in collecting a "variety of empirical data (that is, texts of possibly different genres relating to the same general theme), as well as background information with the help of a multiplicity of elicitation methods" (Reisigl, 2008, pp. 103–104).

In the case of this study, the collection of empirical data meets the criteria of specific periods of time (from 1990 to 2020), specific discourse communities (academics), specific fields of political action (higher education institutions), specific semiotic media (university produced texts on internationalisation and academic articles). The study includes texts of three distinct genres: documents on internationalisation created by university staff, scientific articles written by academics working in the field of education, and focus groups with academics on the topic of internationalisation. The variety of texts helps to achieve triangulation of data and provide different aspects of several text-external criteria of texts: intentionality, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. Intentionality here refers to the purpose of text producers, that is, what is their intention with the text; informativity is concerned with the quantity and quality of (new or expected) information in the text; situationality refers to the speech situation in which the text was produced. Intertextuality refers to the fact that all texts relate to other texts synchronically as well as diachronically and in this relation is how they achieve meaning. This is based on the assumption that every text is embedded in a context (Wodak, 2008).

4.2.1. Data collection and selection for Section 1 of the study

In this part of the research, we were concerned with how universities or, rather, people who work there, conceptualise internationalisation. Two types of data were collected to analyse that. In all stages of data collection, the limiting factor was the availability of data. Documents created by the universities for administrative purposes are not necessarily publicly available or provided in English. Rather successfully, this was not the case for the Estonian university chosen as a case study. In the case of the Lithuanian institution, my command of Lithuanian allowed for the inclusion of documents which were not available in English. The final selection consists of 10 documents ranging from internationalisation plans, strategies or guidelines or university strategies which include internationalisation to language policy guidelines which implicitly discuss internationalisation (5 were developed in the Estonian HEI and 5, in the Lithuanian HEI). The documents from the Estonian HEI range from 2004 to 2020, and from the Lithuanian HEI, from 2009 to 2020. Likely, these represent a limited picture, however, primary analysis has shown an adequate level of data salience.

The document-based data was further supplemented with the focus group data from the Lithuanian HEI which expands the number of discursive actors and helps to recontextualise the text-derived data in the ethnographic data. This segment of the data is comprised of video recordings of 3 focus groups organised internally by the university. The focus groups were originally organised in order to obtain data that would be used as a basis for a university-wide internationalisation strategy, however, the data was not analysed in depth at the time. The video recordings (approx. 5 hours in total) have been transferred to me to use for research purposes, in accordance with the Data Transfer Agreement that was signed between me, the Provider of the Data and the Owner of the data who conducted the focus groups themselves.

The primary results of the research conducted for this section, however, showed only a limited picture. While a number of concepts were used in conjunction with internationalisation, it was a very contemporary picture and it was not sufficient to see how these concepts came to be used. This is explained by the fact that the data was rather heavily skewed towards the present with less documents developed in the early 2000s’ than in the late 2010s’. This also corresponds to how internationalisation was developing in the two countries as discussed in the previous chapter.

4.2.2. Data collection and selection for Section 2 of the study

The lack of university-developed data in the period from 1990 to 2000 led to the second stage of data collection. The EBSCO Education, ERIC and EBSCO Central and Eastern European Academic Source databases were searched using the following search query: (Eastern Europe OR Eastern European OR Central Europe OR Central European OR Lithuania OR Lithuanian OR Estonia OR Estonian) AND AB international* AND TX education. This allowed to search for all publications that referred to Eastern or Central Europe, Estonia or Lithuania in the title or the subject field of the entry, had the word 'education' in the text and 'international' in the abstract. The root form 'international' was chosen based on the assumption that internationalisation as a term may not have been used but its conceptual load can be expressed via other words that share the same root. The search time frame was limited from 1990 01 01 to 1999 12 31. This search yielded 206 entries, and after the document source type was limited to reports and journal articles, 153 entries remained.

Since all the publications were first published in a printed format and later digitized, some errors in the search were observed, for example, some articles did not actually discuss the region or 'international' was mentioned in the journal title rather than the publication itself. Also, even after additional targeted search, some articles were not available. The first round of selection was thus aimed at excluding articles which did not meet the search criteria or the full text was not available. After the first stage of selection, the initial corpus consisted of 72 articles. After the first reading of the articles, the second round of selection was performed on the basis of the most informative and representative articles, those that discussed international education in the region or the target countries in detail, or provided specific information that was not found in the other articles. This resulted in 22 articles that were included into the final corpus of Section 2.

4.2.3. Data collection and selection for Section 3 of the study

The analysis of the data in Section 2 showed the salience of the concept of Central and Eastern Europe in the given period. That, again, is not particularly surprising, given that many radical changes, including in the education system, were happening in the region during that particular decade. However, the primary analysis showed that the concept of Europe was also particularly salient in the context of educational development and various endeavours of an international nature. This led to the development of Section 3 where the focus of the research was deliberately shifted from the concept of internationalisation to the concept of Central and Eastern Europe. The shift in focus led to a certain shift in the approach. Since it is a spatial concept analysed in a temporal space, the Koselleckian notions of space of experience and horizon of expectation (discussed in more detail in Chapter 1) were employed for the analysis.

Since I was concerned with the conceptualisation of the region in the 1990s' in the broader field of education, the data collection was less targeted than in section 2. In order to expand the corpus and include a bigger variety of sources, the Scopus database was used. Since the Scopus database does not have a separate subject area of Education, an additional manual selection was carried out in order to compile the research corpus. I asked the database to provide all the articles where the terms Central and Eastern Europe, Central Europe or Eastern Europe were used in the titles of articles published between 1990 and 2000 in the subject areas of Social Sciences, Business, Management and Accounting and Multidisciplinary. The decision to include Business, Management and Accounting as well as Multidisciplinary was made in order to expand the scope of the corpus, based on the assumption that articles on Business Education (which were popular at the time given the economic changes in the region), for example, could be indexed in that subject area. The following search query was formulated: (TITLE (central AND eastern AND europe) OR TITLE (central AND europe) OR TITLE (eastern AND europe) OR TITLE (central AND eastern AND european) OR TITLE (central AND european) OR TITLE (eastern AND european)) AND PUBYEAR > 1989 AND PUBYEAR < 2001 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "MULT")). In total, this query yielded 1,891 entries in the database, 1,768 of which were published in English.

Three rounds of data selection followed. During the first selection procedure, the article titles were read to determine if they potentially discuss education to account for the absence of a specific subject area. This reduced the corpus to 426 articles. In many cases, the titles were rather ambiguous, for example, 'Modernising' Eastern Europe: Theoretical problems and political dilemmas (Müller, 1992) and not sufficient to determine whether the article meets the data requirements. The second selection round, therefore, included reading the article abstracts and, in some cases, the articles themselves (when abstracts were unavailable) in order to decide upon their inclusion in the database. In this round, we also removed white papers and articles produced by supranational organisations, for example, the OECD, as the aim of the study is to analyse academic discourse. Due to this reasoning, interviews with scientists or opinion pieces by academics were not excluded. This led to a preliminary research database of 117 article entries. The third selection round overlapped with data collection. In order to conduct an analysis, full text of the article was necessary. Since a substantial number of publications were published in print between 1990 and 2000 and then put online at a later date, the limited availability of articles led to a final corpus of 56 articles. The detailed description of the sources the procedures used in data analysis is provided in the following sections.

4.3. Description of data sources

4.3.1. Section 1: Policy texts developed in universities and focus group data

To my knowledge, the documents included in the corpus (listed in Table 1 below) include all of the documents developed in the two universities in the period between 2000 and 2020 related to internationalisation. There is a variety of types as six of them are of a strategic character and four denote observations, guidelines or principles established by the university with regards to internationalisation. Seven are explicitly dedicated to internationalisation, while three are general strategic plans. Since the period of analysis was 1990–2020, documents developed after 2020 were not included. A moderate exception is the Vilnius University Strategic Plan for 2021–2025, adopted in February of 2021 which was included. The reason for this was that the plan itself was developed in 2020 at the latest and it corresponds to the University of Tartu Strategic Plan 2021–2025, adopted in April 2020, as it refers to the same period. Even though the plans set out ambitions towards post-2020 future, they still represent a conceptualisation prevalent at the time of their development, which is the year 2020.

Table 1. *University-made documents included in the corpus*

Document type	Document title	Adopted
Strategy	University of Tartu Internationalisation Strategy	December 2004
Agreement	Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia’s Higher Education (signed by 6 HEIs, incl. University of Tartu)	December 2007
Plan	Plan for Strengthening International Activities at Vilnius University [Vilniaus universiteto tarptautinės veiklos stiprinimo planas]	January 2009

Document type	Document title	Adopted
Strategy	Internationalisation goals and strategic directions at the University of Tartu for 2015–2020	June 2014
Report	International studies at Vilnius University. Analysis of current situation and recommendations for improvement [Tarptautinės studijos Vilniaus universitete. Situacijos analizė ir rekomendacijos veiklos tobulinimui]	2015
Strategic plan	Strategic Plan of Vilnius University for 2018–2020	February 2018
Guidelines	Guidelines for internationalisation of teaching and learning at Vilnius University	November 2019
Strategic plan	University of Tartu Strategic Plan 2021–2025	April 2020
Principles	Language and internationalisation principles of the University of Tartu	December 2020
Strategic plan	Vilnius University Strategic Plan for 2021–2025	February 2021

The three focus groups were organised at Vilnius university in 2018. All 27 participants were academic employees, some of whom held an executive position. The topics of all the groups were the same and the discussions revolved around the academics' understanding of internationalisation, what they considered an international university or an international study programme. All the participants were expected to have had international experience personally or have participated in internationalisation activities. The video recordings were obtained as is, and were subsequently transcribed. The three focus groups are analysed together because aside from their managerial positions, all informants are teaching academics who represent different disciplines and are of different seniority in their academic careers. The participants are not described in greater detail in order to preserve their anonymity.

4.3.2. Section 2: Academic articles published between 1990 and 2000 on higher education in Eastern Europe

As the following tables 2 and 3 (below) indicate, the corpus for section 2 of the study included 22 articles published in the period between 1990 and 2000. Coincidentally, they are equally distributed in the two halves of the decade. This, as well as other characteristics were not deliberately pursued but rather dictated by the availability of data. As noted in Table 3, the majority of articles were published in the European Journal of Education, as there were two special issues on Central and Eastern Europe in 1993 and 1997 and the full text documents of these articles are currently available. The full list of article-sources is provided in Annex 1.

Table 2. *Distribution of academic articles on higher education in Eastern Europe included in the corpus, by year of publication*

Year of publication	No. of articles
1990	2
1991	1
1992	1
1993	4
1994	2
1995	1
1996	4
1997	5
1998	0
1999	2

Table 3. *Distribution of academic articles on higher education in Eastern Europe included in the corpus, by source of publication*

Source of publication	No. of articles
European Journal of Education	16
European Education	3
International Journal of Social Education	1
Medical Education	1
Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia	1

4.3.3. Section 3: Academic articles published between 1990 and 2000 with terms ‘Central and Eastern Europe’, ‘Central Europe’ or ‘Eastern Europe’

Since the preliminary search in the EBSCO database yielded a small number of results, the search for articles which discussed the notions of Central and Eastern Europe was conducted in the Scopus database. The total number of articles included in the corpus is 56, almost a quarter of which were published in 1999 (Table 4). In contrast to the previous case, only 15 articles were published in the first half of the decade. This is, at least in part, a result of the availability of the articles which increased significantly in the later years compared to the earlier ones. The 56 articles are distributed among 42 academic journals. This great variety is an unintended consequence of the use of Scopus database. The absence of a defined 'Education' category made the process more reliant on manual selection, but at the same time allowed for a variety of sources that a more defined search system could prevent. The full list of article-sources is provided in Annex 2.

Table 4. *Distribution of academic articles on education with terms 'Central and Eastern Europe', 'Central Europe' or 'Eastern Europe' in the corpus, by year of publication*

Year of publication	No. of articles
1990	3
1991	3
1992	3
1993	3
1994	3
1995	4
1996	6
1997	3
1998	9
1999	13
2000	6

Table 5. *Distribution of academic articles on education with terms 'Central and Eastern Europe', 'Central Europe' or 'Eastern Europe' in the corpus, by source of publication*

Source of publication	No. of articles
Business Horizons	2
Childhood Education	1
Communist and Post-Communist Studies	1
Community and Junior College Libraries	1
Comparative Education	1
Comparative Studies in Society and History	1
Day Care & Early Education	1
Development in Practice	1
Education Policy Analysis Archives	1
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis	1
Educational Forum	1
Educational Technology, Research and Development	1
European Education	5
European Journal of Special Needs Education	1
Geographia Polonica	1
Information Processing and Management	1

Source of publication	No. of articles
International Journal of Early Years Education	1
International Journal of Educational Management	1
International Journal of Public Administration	1
International Review of Education	1
Journal of Archaeological Research	1
Journal of Chemical Education	1
Journal of East European Management Studies	1
Journal of Education for Business	1
Journal of European Industrial Training	1
Journal of Geography in Higher Education	1
Journal of Management Development	1
Language Teaching	1
Management Learning	2
Minerva	2
Nature	1
Proceedings – Frontiers in Education Conference	2
Prospects	1
PS: Political Science & Politics	1
Public Administration Review	1
Science	3
Science and Public Policy	1
Scientometrics	2
Social Studies of Science	2
Technovation	1
Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations	1
Young	1

4.4. Data analysis and presentation

The data analysis procedures largely followed the guidelines provided by the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) and combined the methods used in Conceptual History with those used in DHA research. The first stage of analysis consisted of thematic analysis of university-produced texts, as suggested by Wodak and Meyer (2016): "after the first data collection one should perform first pilot analyses, find indicators for particular concepts (…) and on the basis of these first results, collect further data" (p. 21). This data was then supplement with focus group data for the Lithuanian case as it became available.

Analytic induction was used as a method of coding and identifying themes in the data. Often, focus group data analysis is conducted using the questions asked by the moderator. In this case, the moderator's questions were very broad and required participants to elaborate in detail on specificities of a general term, thus, the primary categories were only partially influenced by the moderator's questions. The following questions were asked: what do you associate with internationalisation, what is internationalisation, how do we know that a university is international, what are the attributes of an international(-ised) study programme, what should be done in the university in order to achieve greater internationalisation. The focus group data was analysed *in corpore* and considered as a singular text as the main aim was the understanding of internationalisation in a given academic community as a whole and not of any particular segment of said community. The primary analysis revealed gaps in the data which led to additional data collection to elaborate on the period from 1990 to 2000. Thematic analysis was again employed to determine the salience of the articles which should be selected for further analysis.

The second stage of the analysis employed the method of close reading widely used in Conceptual History. This was, however, done in line with the DHA: "1) having identified the specific content or topics of the specific discourse, 2) discursive strategies are investigated" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 32). As we are concerned with the concept of internationalisation, the focus lies on the discursive strategies of nomination and predication. The strategy of nomination in discourse is used for the discursive construction of social actors, phenomena, events and processes while predication is employed for discursive qualification of said actors, objects, etc. The questions for the data analysis are thus 1) how are institutions, objects, phenomena and processes related to internationalisation named and referred to linguistically in the text; and 2) what characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to these social actors, objects, phenomena and processes? (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016).

Close reading is a method that was originally developed in literary studies and criticism, however, it has also been used in other fields working with textual data such as history or law. It is defined as "a method, or a loose collection of methods, aimed at evaluating how a text is assembled and discerning the implications of its linguistic choices" (Byron, 2021, p. 2). In effect, it refers to procedures and methods that distinguish a scholarly apprehension of textual materials from everyday reading practices. In literary studies, close reading entails an examination of a literary work with sustained attention to its grammar, syntax, vocabulary, rhetoric, allusion or other types of intertextuality; the specific elements are determined by the motivations for close reading.

Traditionally, close reading tended to disregard the authorial intention, historical and social contexts or other extra-textual dimensions, however, with the arrival of structuralism and post-structuralism and the adoption of close reading techniques in various fields of the social sciences, the importance of context grew more prominent. The distinction, according to Byron (2021), since the 1960s, lies in the "attention given to other intellectual and social structures as means by which to generate meaning, or to show how meaning is networked between texts and their contexts" (p. 15). In the case of this study, close reading is used to interrogate all three types of data to enunciate both on the discursive strategies described above, and develop the semantic field of internationalisation in the given time period.

Semantic fields are sometimes referred to as conceptual fields in Conceptual History but the device itself comes from linguistics. A semantic field is defined as "a lexical set of words grouped semantically (by meaning) that refers to a specific subject" (Jackson & Zé Amvela, 2000, p. 14). In linguistics, the theory of semantic fields was developed throughout the 20th century and underscored the shifting approach to the study of meaning, from its study in isolation to an increasingly more global approach to the study of meaning in its linguistic, social and cognitive context (Nerlich & Clarke, 2000). In the theory of field semantics, the meaning of the word "is the totality of its possible relations with all other words in a semantic field" (ibid, p. 145). In Conceptual History, concepts are understood to constitute semantic building blocks in a text or a discourse and construct its discursive architecture. Due to such conceptual behaviour, concepts are nested in semantic fields and cannot be studied in isolation as its semantic field serves as meaning-constructing space for a concept (Ifversen, 2011). The semantic field of a concept includes other concepts that are invoked in the data in relation (support, opposition, duplication) to the concept under study. Overall, such schematic representation allows to show not only the existence of other concepts in the semantic field but also their positioning with regards to the concept under study.

4.5. Research limitations

While the conversation between Conceptual History and the Discourse-Historical Approach of Critical Discourse Studies is not impossible as demonstrated by Krzyżanowski (2016, 2019), it is by no means simple or straightforward. In this thesis, the theoretical approach combines both Conceptual History and the Discourse-Historical Approach. On the spectrum from CDS-informed Conceptual History to CH-informed DHA (which could be the aforementioned discourse-conceptual analysis proposed by Krzyżanowski (2016)) this study leans closer to CDS (specifically, DHA)-informed Conceptual History. Methodologically, the study attempts to combine the two. This, to an extent, leads to certain methodological limitations with regards to both approaches.

A classical discourse-historical analysis would, ideally, include a greater variety of genres and a bigger number of texts, even though Wodak and Reisigl (2016) have noted that certain limitations are expected in a research of limited scope and capacity such as a PhD study wherein only several genres and a limited number of texts are expected to be included. The high level of linguistic aggregation in DHA is also perhaps not always fully achieved in this study that leans closer towards the interpretive line of CH. A conceptual history of the concept of internationalisation, even if regionally limited, should go further back in history to, ideally, include the post-war period, even though the sources would be limited and difficult to obtain. It is also more common to focus on one country and/or one linguistic community, though that does not mean that analysis of several countries are not possible.

The most limiting factor in this study is the scarcity of data. Publicly available documents only exist from the early 2000s and documents no longer considered relevant (such as older strategic plans) are removed once they lapse. Internal documents developed in universities are also not available in general archives, especially when they are comparatively recent, as is the case here. Since no documents from the period of 1990–2000 on internationalisation were found (and there is enough reason to doubt whether many were drafted at all), academic publications were chosen as a data source. This choice is also dictated by what is available and searchable. Even though the databases and search systems have their own shortcomings, they still provide access to data that represents a comparable set of political and social actors. An alternative would be to analyse public debates but those happening at the universities were only recorded internally (if recorded at all), and general audience or political debates would lead the study in a different direction, further away from university discourse.

Another limiting factor is the choice to collect data in English rather than the national languages. The exception is the inclusion of 2 documents and focus group transcripts in Lithuanian. If only documents in English were included, out of those that specifically discuss internationalisation, only one would be developed in Vilnius University. To mitigate this imbalance, additional data in Lithuanian was included. The decision to include these data was made because it allowed for a more balanced and varied corpus; otherwise, the number of documents developed in the Estonian context would exceed the number of documents developed in the Lithuanian one. The focus group data is included because it elaborates on the Lithuanian segment of the study which was analytically not as saturated as its Estonian counterpart and was developed in 2018, which falls inside the second time period.

While the focus group data itself is not ideal as it was collected for a different purpose by a University employee, its role in the study is supplemental to the university-made documents. Nonetheless, the study would have certainly benefitted from targeted focus groups in both universities which was hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, the decision to include the focus groups as they were, was based on the fact that I had access to the full video recordings and could determine that the way in which the focus groups were conducted did not have a significant impact on the responses. While they were conducted by a University employee, it was not a person that many participants knew personally or someone in an important position which could cause reluctance to share critical insights. The discussions, however, could have been slightly biased towards the practical implications of internationalisation as a number of questions were related to how the university can implement internationalisation. Nonetheless, there were still general questions which were very vague and allowed for relatively deep discussions on how the participants conceptualised internationalisation.

The fundamental choice of English over the national languages was based in practicality; I am only fluent in Lithuanian and not in Estonian. The inclusion of data in Estonian could have hypothetically influenced the research results, however, English is the ultimate language of internationalisation and it is most often discussed in this medium. English also made sense given the expanded regional scope of sections 2 and 3. If I was to focus only on Lithuania and Estonia, even including national languages, the number of publications on internationalisation would be extremely low, particularly in the period from 1990 to 2000. Given the relatively small education research communities, heavily impacted by the ideological nature of social research during the occupation of the Soviet Union and the vast number of issues of interest to the newly independent researcher, the overall number of higher education research in the period from 1990 to 2000 in the two countries was quite limited, and research on internationalisation was virtually non-existent. This, then, led to the choice to include publications which discussed higher education in other Central and Eastern European countries in the earliest period and focus on Lithuania and Estonia specifically in the later one. The use of English throughout the corpora allowed for a higher level of data cohesion as methodologically, the different sections of data are analysed together. While certain internal contradictions in the results are discussed, the two universities are not treated as separate cases but rather as segments of a single case study.

The use of multiple corpora makes it difficult to conduct a cohesive analysis, in other words, to make sure that all the moving parts are working towards the same goal. The three separate corpora include 78 academic publications of varying lengths, 5 hours of transcribed recordings and 10 strategy or policy documents. This inevitably leads to a comparatively high level of synthesis in the analysis in order to bring all this data together. The construction of semantic fields is a representation of this synthesis. It is particularly challenging to decide which concepts should be included in the field and provide accurate representation of the connections between them. Without doubt, it is a crude simplification of the actual semantic and historical complexity of a concept, as discussed in Chapter 1. Hopefully, the analysis presented in the written form in the next chapter serves as a sufficient explanation and elucidates on the complexity of the semantic fields discussed below.

5. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN EASTERN EUROPE FROM 1990 TO 2020

This chapter is dedicated to the results of the study. First, we elaborate on the development of the concept *Eastern and Central Europe* in the academic scholarship on education in the period from 1990 to 2000 as it provides valuable context for the later study of the concept of internationalisation, both in the academic scholarship in the period from 1990 to 2000 and in University discourse in the two universities from 2000 to 2020. In the first section, the spatial concept *Central and Eastern Europe* is placed on a temporal axis to illustrate the spatiotemporal distribution of concepts. In the case of the other two analyses, the semantic field is presented as a map of related concepts. In all three sections, the semantic field of the concept is provided in visual form and the main concepts are analysed in the text. In the analysis, the focus is on 1) where the concept is located in relation to other concepts; 2) how these concepts are described and how that explains their interconnections; 3) how these concepts are referred to and described linguistically in the texts and what discursive purposes these choices serve.

5.1. Concept of Central and Eastern Europe in education research from 1990 to 2000

The focus on a Central and Eastern European conceptualisation of internationalisation presupposes a distinction. That is, for the conceptualisation of internationalisation to differ to an observable extent, there needs to be some kind of distinction between the 'Western' conceptualisation and the 'Eastern'. At first, this was nothing more than intuition, an educated guess. However, even a brief look at the field of education research confirmed that there indeed was a difference between the two regional entities: out of 1,749 articles available in the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) database with the word 'Europe' in the title, published between 1990 and 2020, 562 articles bear some variation of the label 'Central and Eastern Europe' in the title. Curiously, 'Western Europe' appears in 71 articles, most of them (37) dating back to the period from 1990 to 2000. This was an indication that some kind of difference existed not only in the conceptualisations of higher education internationalisation but also in how the regions themselves were conceptualised in educational scholarship. Therefore, before we tackle the concept of internationalisation in Eastern Europe, it is prudent to delve deeper into the at first glance self-explanatory concept of Eastern Europe, particularly at a time when the region was coming back into the international education research community, the last decade of the 20th century.

Figure 4. *Semantic field of Central and Eastern Europe in internationally published education research from 1990 to 2000*

As the conceptualisation of Central and Eastern Europe (and its variant concepts) was observed to be situated along a relatively clear temporal axis, the semantic field is visualised differently than in the two following cases. Since the countries that were referred to using the terms of the conceptual cluster of Central and Eastern Europe were experiencing a lot of changes at the time, their conceptualisation was situated on the axis from the past to the future (Figure 4), which underscored the use of space of experience and horizon of expectation (discussed in Chapter 1) as appropriate heuristic devices. It is also worth mentioning that given the international nature of the corpus, this is closer to an external conceptualisation than to an internal one. While the authors of the articles analysed were both from inside and outside the region, since the texts were published internationally they were still developed with the external community in mind.

5.1.1. The space of experience

In a quantitative analysis of 66 articles on education published internationally between 1990 and 2000 and indexed in the Scopus database, the region is referred to as Central and Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, Central Europe and East Central Europe. The first two terms are used with similar frequency (23 and 28 times, respectively), however, they are differently distributed in time. The most prolific term – Eastern Europe – and Central Europe are used almost equally throughout the period. Central and Eastern Europe, however, is mentioned only 4 times in the first half of the decade and only becomes the dominant term after 1995. The countries that are mentioned in the majority of articles that use the term Central and Eastern Europe are Poland and Hungary, both referred to in all 23 cases where the term was used. Estonia and Lithuania are mentioned 12 and 11 times, respectively.

A similar picture emerges when the term Eastern Europe is considered. Hungary (15 mentions), Poland (13) and the Czech Republic (2) are the leaders. Estonia is mentioned 4 times and Lithuania, 3. This difference in country distribution is likely explained by the relatively high term frequency in the period from 1990 to 1995. It took at least until the second half of 1991 for Lithuania, Latvia (mentioned 2 times) and Estonia to fully establish their independence from the Soviet Union that the three proclaimed in 1990, therefore, the three states were not as prominent as in the later period when the term Central and Eastern Europe became more popular. Overall, the patterns of country distribution in the corpus show that the terms Central and Eastern Europe, Central Europe and Eastern Europe are used quite interchangeably and without much reflection. Virtually the same countries are mentioned as belonging to any region and no relation between the regional term that is used and the countries mentioned is observed (Orechova, 2023b)[3].

In terms of definitions provided by the authors, in most cases, they choose not to define the concept they use and only a small number discuss the concept in more depth. In the majority of cases, the countries are merely listed and only brief descriptions are provided. For example, Eastern Europe is described as including "all former socialist countries in Eastern and Central Europe, also East Germany (till 1990 German Democratic Republic) and all countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU)" (Havemann, 1996) and Central and Eastern Europe is referred to as consisting of "countries belonging to 16 either 'old' or 'new' Central and Eastern European countries (the Warsaw Treaty countries, the former Soviet republics, the countries belonging to former Yugoslavia)" (Piwowarski, 1998).

[3] This chapter builds on an article I wrote (Orechova, 2023b) for a special issue of Studia Literaria et Historica "Central and Eastern Europe in Academic Internationalization: Peripherality, Neoliberalism, and Knowledge Production".

In rare cases the authors include elaborate definitions with their own typology and distinctions. For instance, Cerych (1999) considers the Central and Eastern European countries divided into the Visegrad group (Hungary, Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Slovenia and Croatia), Southeastern Europe (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and the former Yugoslav republics other than Slovenia and Croatia), the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) and the former Soviet Republics (the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova). The author explains that such distribution is based on shared historical past of these country groupings, a common religion, and the similar development of the education systems of the countries. In many of these cases, history takes precedence over geography. For example, Szebenyi (1992) provides the following explanation for the term East Central Europe:

> The word 'East' in that expression comes from widespread practice collectively designating the former Soviet Bloc countries as 'East European' countries. The word 'Central' points to the fact that this region, in a geographical sense, is much closer to Western Europe than to Eastern Europe. In reality, however, it means much more than the geographical location of that region. The history of East Central Europe, as a relatively homogeneous region, reaches back into the distant past (p. 19).

Geographical reasoning is also rejected by Bogucki (1993) who claims that even geographically close countries may have very little in common due to historical or cultural circumstances and goes as far as to call Eastern Europe an "artificial entity" (p. 146). Sadlak (1991) provides the following explanation for the use of Central and Eastern Europe over Eastern Europe:

> Europe itself sometimes being called a géométrie variable, implies difficulty in making precise and unbiased regional divisions. Therefore, in order to counterbalance *an arbitrary bipolar geopolitical division of Europe into 'Western' and 'Eastern'*[4], it is now argued that the term 'Eastern and Central Europe' better reflects the cultural and economic diversity of this part of Europe (p. 412).

Given that Eastern Europe was observed to be increasingly replaced with Central and Eastern Europe, we can assume that the argument proposed by Sadlak here eventually did take hold in the international academic scholarship on education.

The vast majority of articles made reference to the recent communist past of the countries in the region. Given the selected time period, the usage of

[4] Here and below, the emphasis in the excerpts of data are mine, unless stated otherwise.

terms such as ‘post-communist’, ‘East(ern) Bloc’ or ‘former Soviet states’ is not surprising. As some country names (for instance, Czechoslovakia) were still in flux (especially in the first half of the decade), the usage of a more familiar referent is quite expected. However, the extent to how much widespread this description was, points to a rather unanimous view held by the education research community at the time. A description of the post/former type was often the only one used and it was both employed to describe individual countries as well as argue for their analysis as a unit. It is safe to argue that the region was understood primarily as post-, in the sense that its primary characteristic was something that happened in the past. In the light of complex regional definitions and differences among the countries of geographical Central and Eastern Europe, their unwillingly shared communist past became the unifying force in constructing it as an area for education research, regardless of whether it was called Eastern or Central European.

In certain cases, this unification appears to be somewhat reflected and the reasons provided for the linguistic choice of post/former sometimes sound like justifications. For example, this is an explanation given in an article *The Stalled Revolution: Business Education in Eastern Europe* (Bennet, 1996):

> Ordinarily, the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe is too broad an area to make meaningful generalizations about. But because business education has been based on the same communist system (…) To an outsider, the schools look very much alike and the people in them behave in very similar ways. There are differences, of course, but the striking observation is how much the institutions have in common (p. 25).

In response to potential and discursively available criticisms of homogenization, the author builds the argument of unification upon the communist system. This argumentative frame is particularly relevant in the areas of business and management education because the process of transition from planned economy to market economy was perceived to follow the same steps in all the countries of the region.

Notably, even when a regional concept is used, it is used together with the reference to the ‘former’ status, as seen in the example above as well as, for instance, “Ever since the change of system in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, the European Union has committed itself to the renewal of the higher education system in the former East bloc countries” (Wuttig, 1998, p. 89). One possible reason for this double-layered description may lie in the fact that Central and Eastern Europe is considered to be less clear than the former East Bloc. In other words, the conceptualisation of the past is less contested than that of the present. This is, first, supported by the fact that Central and Eastern

Europe as the regional title only started dominating in the second half of the decade. Second, the many variations of how the countries of the region are referred to and the lack of uniformity in which countries are considered to be part of the area described by the concept, creates a certain level of ambiguity that the authors may wish to avoid. In such case, the use of 'post-communist' or 'former Eastern bloc' allows to refer to an observed fact rather than a concept as such. This, of course, comes with certain implications but it also provides a certainty which can, theoretically, balance the ambiguity of the concept. In terms of the semantic field, the prevalence of 'post' and 'former'-mediated concepts points to a quite clearly delineated space of (recent) experience and orients the concept to its past. In other words, the concept is described more precisely in terms of its space of experience than its horizon of expectation.

The post/former conceptual elements indicate a point of departure, that is, the primarily metaphysical place from which the region is expected to move or, in the language of the corpus, transit. Consequently, movement language is noticeable in the corpus: lag behind, catch up, forward, backwards. Even 'transition', one of the keywords of the time, implies movement from one stage or place to another. In this case, it also describes the path from the space of experience to the horizon of expectation; the way to leave this past-coded space is via transition. The specific words chosen to describe this transition are also telling. 'Lag' indicates a falling behind, a failure to keep up with something while 'catch up' is defined as 'reach a state of parity' or 'complete or compensate for something belatedly'. Consider, for instance these statements: "*Even* the former East Germany still *lags behind the west*—despite massive efforts to bolster its research base" (Koenig, 1999, p. 24); "Development of international co-operation has gained additional significance as many institutions and academics see it as an important venue to *catch up with international scholarly standards*" (Sadlak, 1991, p. 409). Almost in direct opposition to the perceived technological advancement of the USSR, the state of science and research in Central and Eastern European countries is described as sorely lacking: "whether the EU opts to expand quickly, or slowly, into post-communist Europe, nearly everyone agrees that it will be decades before the *level of science in the region will match that of the west*" (Koenig, 1999, p. 24). It is reasonable to say that the discourse of 'catching up to the West' which, in education, persists to this day (Dakowska, 2015) was developing and steadily gaining ground at the time.

Another concept, heavily associated with transition, is *progress*, which in a sense, clarifies the transition. Instead of merely moving from one space to another, the movement implied by progress is towards an improvement.

Progress, conceptually, is also a future-oriented concept which already carries a normative value pointing to an ideal future (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). Since we have already seen that the point of departure is the communist past, the concept of progress allows to infer that the region is expected to progress towards something better and provides an evaluative layer to the concept of post-communist and, by extension, the concept of Central and Eastern Europe. This is exemplified by statements such as the following: "A much less homogenous structure of disciplinary advantages based on papers suggest that *even* in the immediate post-communist period *some progress away from a common pattern and towards nationally specific patterns of science* has taken place" (Kozlowski et al., 1999, p. 164). Noteworthy here is the use of 'even' which implies that the author did not expect any kind of progress in the immediate post-communist period accentuating the negative value connected to it. Curiously, an uncommon use of 'progress away' indicates that moving away from something that is associated with the communist past already indicates progress, that is, an improvement. It can also be interpreted as a newer version of the oriental backwardness trope if we accept Zarycki's (2014) argument that once the Soviet Union lost its symbolic capital, the communist past of the region was used to explain its underdevelopment. While conceptually post-communist points to the available experiential context, it also carries a normative assumption that this is something that the region was, but should no longer be. It is the second conceptual pair that points to what the region shall be and conceptually constructs the horizon of expectation.

5.1.2. The horizon of expectation

The horizon of expectation for the conceptual cluster of Central and Eastern Europe consists of concepts which denote what are the possible expectations for how the concept may be described in the future. As we have now established that the CEE is expected to progress, that is, to move towards something better, two questions remain: what is this better state and how is CEE perceived to be able to reach it. Not surprisingly, given the popularity of the resurgent modernisation theory and its application to Central and Eastern Europe, one of the goals is modernity or a modern state, at first conceptualised as the process of modernisation: "As I have tried to show, higher education in Eastern and Central Europe has, despite numerous difficulties, made an auspicious start in the direction of modernization" (Sadlak, 1991, p. 411). Grammatically, modernisation refers to a process of becoming modern. Conceptually, however, modernisation is an example of a future-associated movement concept wherein the fixed form of modernity is transformed into an ongoing process (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). Hence, both progress and modernisation allude to an improvement but neither point to any kind of achievement which underscores the state of the concept (and, by extension, of the region conceptualised by it) as one in flux.

In light of the discourse of improvement, improvement itself is sometimes conceptualised as a destination, especially in the field of education. This also ties in with the post-communist region conceptualised as having lower quality of education, science and research as discussed in the section above: "foreign language education in CEE countries has *set off on the road to professional excellence*" (Enyedi & Medgyes, 1998, p. 11). There do not seem to be numerous ways to achieve this improvement. Indeed, one way clearly dominates – the concepts *progress* and *transition* in the semantic field of Central and Eastern Europe are connected to the concept of assistance. Even a simple lexical search shows that aid or assistance is mentioned in half of the documents in the corpus (28 out of 56). It is important to note that the concept of assistance can be invoked using other words as well. Consider the following passage:

> *Technical assistance* will be needed in curriculum development along the lines of democracy and a market economy and teacher training, in particular. Reforms of such magnitude and complexity deserve *more interest* from *foreign aid donors*. It is necessary to bring in *more foreign expertise to help* MEE [Middle and Eastern European – M. O.] countries to steer and monitor reforms undertaken by them. (Pachociński, 1997, p. 24)

There are three variations of assistance indicated in the quote: technical assistance, foreign aid and foreign expertise. What Pachociński calls technical assistance in other cases is conceptualised as knowledge transfer. When either the present or the future is considered, the notion of the transfer of knowledge to the newly available area is quite persistent. Fogel (1990), for instance, argues that "the wise educator" shall approach management education in the region "with caution, yet great excitement that a large impact can be made if the education is presented effectively. Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union *form the next frontier for Western educators*" (p. 19). This, again, underscores the perceived incapability of the region to progress on its own. Some, however, question the unilateral knowledge transfer in education policy: Jankowicz (1999) proposes that "we shift our metaphor about the process in which we're engaged, and talk of mutual knowledge creation rather than unidirectional knowledge transfer" (p. 283).

However, if knowledge can at least theoretically flow both ways, the same does not apply to financial aid. The logic of modernisation theory presumes that societal development must come together or, indeed, be preceded by economic development. As the balance was fundamentally unequal in this regard, the financial aid came with strings attached:

> In many cases, multilateral donor agencies such as the World Bank and European Union began to analyze each CEE nation for suitability to a free market. Their involvement is often driven by the belief that neo-liberal economics and the proliferation of a free market will benefit developing nations and fuel a global market. Consequently, those nations that were analyzed and that measured up to a free market economy were rewarded with millions and millions of dollars of developmental assistance. (Slowinski, 1999, p. 23)

The notions of assistance and transfer conceptually also imply an imbalance wherein one side is helping and the other is accepting help. The purpose of this help also points to the direction of progress that CEE is expected to take and reveals that the progress is happening on the East–West scale. The foreign expertise, the Western educators, the financial aid are all coming from the West with the intent to make CEE *move towards* the West. It is very concisely illustrated in the following quotes:

> The *most spectacular progress hitherto has been registered in countries situated on the 'western rim'*, which happened to be the first to undergo the historic changes. At the time of writing, it looks as though the *wave of development is swiftly moving east* (Enyedi & Medgyes, 1998, p. 11)
>
> The first three breakaway republics – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – have *turned their backs on Moscow* and are eager to attract new masters in Brussels through *continuing reforms towards a Western type of society* (Tomusk, 1998, p. 126)

Both of these examples underscore the distance and dichotomy between East and West and indicate that as CEE moves towards the West, it moves away from the East.

This discourse of the aspirational normative West is sometimes criticized, especially in terms of curriculum: "the tendency has been to promote "Western" courses and structures – an approach internally far too diverse to have meaning from a Western perspective" (Tomusk, 1998, p. 126). However, rather overwhelmingly, the horizon of expectation for Central and Eastern Europe is associated with the West, both in practical terms, in the aspirations to join the European Union, and in the oriental notion of becoming the civilised West as opposed to the barbarian East. The two notions are associated respectively with movement forwards and backwards: "We hope that this region will *move forward-in the direction of modern Europe*-but it cannot be entirely excluded that it could move backwards" (Szebenyi, 1992, p. 30). Crucial here are the directional concepts 'forward' and 'backward' and the explicit statement that 'modern Europe' is forward, that is, located in the space of progress.

As we encounter the concept of modernity again, it is important to note that in this corpus, 'modern' almost exclusively refers to Western or Western-like, for instance, "the readiness of faculty to teach modern or Westernized management concepts" (Waddock, 1997, p. 373) or "the implementation of project funding, grant systems and peer review must be seen as an important step forward to a modern research system" (Balazs, 1995, p. 680). This not only applies to education, but to the construction of society as such:

> What was at "stake" was the forging of a nation based not on principles of tyrannical control but, for the first time, one based on the informed consent of the governed, across the full gamut of religions, classes, languages, and ethnicities from which the *modern heterogeneous state* was contrived. (Heyneman, 2000, p. 176)

The quote above is followed with an example on the formation of the Dutch society as a reference society.

The concept of Central and Eastern Europe can be described as being located between the defective East which is conceptualised via the post-communist descriptions which carry a negative value, and the normative West which is constructed via the concepts of progress and modernity. Effectively, the horizon of expectation for Central and Eastern Europe entails becoming… Europe. Marked with adjectives such as modern or greater, it nonetheless expresses the normative West. This analysis serves as a valuable context for the analysis of the concept of internationalisation in the Central and Eastern European academic scholarship from 1990 to 2000 presented in the following section.

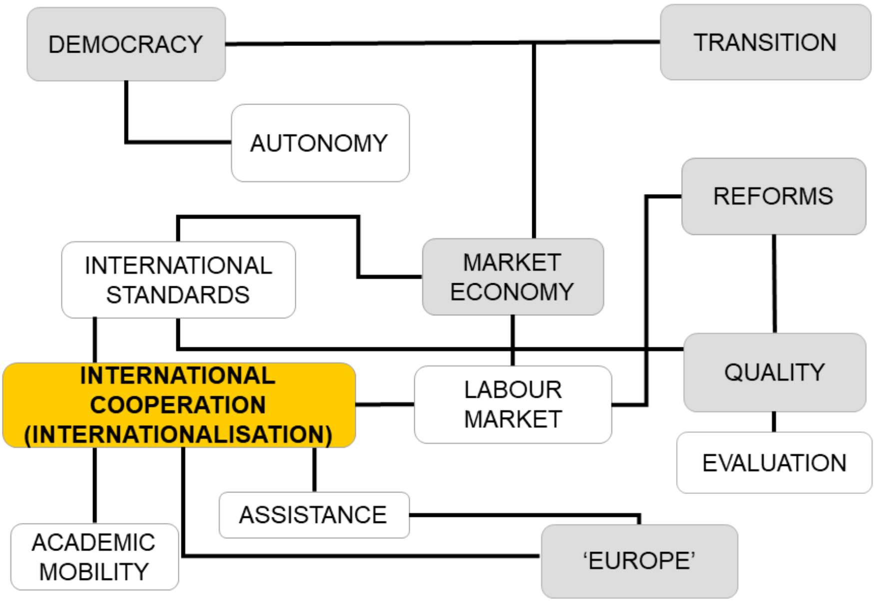

Figure 5. *Semantic field of internationalisation in internationally published education research on Central and Eastern European internationalisation from 1990 to 2000*

To say that internationalisation did not dominate the conversation on Eastern European higher education in 1990s would be an understatement. Even in the corpus collected specifically for the analysis of international activities of any kind, it takes a secondary position. In the semantic field, internationalisation is placed on the side rather than in the centre precisely to show this secondary role. Nonetheless, some of the elements that will later figure more prominently can already be observed in this period as well. The highlighted concepts (in grey) are the focal ones around which the adjacent concepts are placed. The lines show the connections between the concepts. These connections were inferred from the use of concepts; the concepts are considered connected not because of their semantic relation but because they go together in the discourse. It is important to stress that the lines indicating connections as well as the placement of concepts is a simplified representation of the actual conceptual load of the concept. In language use as well as in concept use, the multiple meanings overlap and enforce or mitigate each other; however, in a static two-dimensional format it is the best approximation of the discursive architecture of internationalisation in the academic scholarship on Central and Eastern Europe of the 1990s.

At a glance, the discourse on higher education seems to be somewhat lacking in concepts that pertain to education. In other words, the discourse is dominated by concepts that reflect the state of the society more than that of education precisely. The focal concepts are transition, market economy, democracy, Europe, reforms and quality. Thus, only the last two are directly related to education. These concepts are connected to one another, albeit to a different extent. The concept of transition holds the most connections among the central concepts as it is invoked together with the concepts of democracy, market economy and reforms. It is also indirectly connected to Europe. We shall now take a closer look at these and their surrounding concepts.

5.2.1. Transition

Given the historical context, the prominence of transition is not surprising and it was already observed in the semantic field of the concept of Eastern Europe in the same time period. In this case, however, transition is even more focal. In the corpus, it is most often expressed in the words change, transition, transformation. Conceptually, it is related to several concepts, both directly and indirectly. There are two kinds of transitions that is described with the use of this concept and it is illustrated in the connections with democracy and market economy. The discourse here effectively splits into two parallel tracks. There is an economic track of transition that is related to the economic development in the region, the functioning of the market economy, and the growing importance of the labour market in the education discourse. There is also another kind of transition included in the concept, one that is connected to the social development and the concept of democracy. The connection to the concept of reforms which refers to the reforms of the education sector encompasses both of these tracks as the reforms in education include changes of economic nature but also have a values dimension. There are differences among the texts in terms of whether this transition is contextual to higher education or something that universities actively participate in.

Consider, for instance, these excerpts:

> ... allows us single out some crucial areas of social, political and economic life where the university can render important services to the cause of development. In this context the most important functions of the university seem to be:

> a) in forming values and ideas, needed for sustainable democracy;
> b) in fostering inter- and intra-national links as it creates an elite, needed for sustainable cultural and economic development;
> c) in providing service functions, needed for economic and educational development. (Kwiatkowski, 1990, p. 393)

> The reform of higher education is taking place in the context of the transition to market economies and democracy and is linked to this process, the outcomes of which are by no means clear or determined. (Farnes, 1997, p. 380)

In the first case, the university is considered an active participant, while in the second, the higher education reforms are *linked* to the process of transition; the framing here alludes to the two processes happening simultaneously rather than the universities participating in the process of social and economic transition. A third kind of use for the concept of transition pertains to the transition of higher education institutions themselves:

> As a result of political changes, international collaboration and assistance has been decentralised in all countries. (...) Although under these circumstances nobody can have a reliable picture of its scope, there can be no doubt either that radical progress has been achieved in this domain in all four countries, and that the majority of our responders regard international assistance and collaboration as an important factor in the process of transforming research and educational systems. (Amsterdamski & Rhodes, 1993, p. 395)

It is noteworthy that when changes in higher education are discussed, the word most often used is not transition but rather transformation. This serves to show that the changes in societies are conceived of as relatively gradual since transition implies a shift from one state to another. On the other hand, the changes that should happen or are happening in higher education institutions at the time are considered more radical as transformation refers to a change in the composition or structure of something (this also applies to the word reform which is commonly used in education). In the passage quoted above, this is further intensified by the use of the phrase 'radical progress' which is used to stress the extreme nature of the change. While it could be argued that the societal changes were no less transformative, the discourse reflects that these changes were conceived of as a movement (transition). Higher education institutions, however, were associated with a word that implies a metamorphosis (transformation) which is a significantly more radical process.

5.2.2. Democracy

The concept of democracy, which, in a way, is the destination of the transition discussed above is also at least twofold. In terms of societal transition, it encompasses the aspirations of the newly independent countries to establish democratic institutions and processes which should, in theory, lead to open societies. To name this aspect, the word 'democratisation' is sometimes used to imply the process of becoming a democracy and higher education institutions also take an important role in this process.

> Democracy cannot be instituted without preamble. It has to become a culture in itself, a way of life. What in 'old' democracies goes without saying, what every child thinks has always existed, in 'new' democracies has to be carefully nurtured and cultivated. (…) Needless to say, the university cannot be replaced here by any other institution (except another institution of higher education). (Kwiatkowski, 1990, p. 393)

The author later continues to describe the conception of university as that of "one of those social institutions which are really pivotal for sustainable democracy" (ibid, p. 394). Serban (1996) observes that "governments of these countries have begun to emphasize the role of higher education in the process of democratization and economic change" (p. 26). Zachariev (1999) goes on to confirm that "education is increasingly regarded as an institution of social change and political, economic, and social renewal" (p. 25). In this sense, universities are tasked with the education of the necessary values and competencies that can foster democratic change in the countries.

With regards to the changes in the higher education sector, the concept of democracy implies the introduction of democratic principles in the management of higher education institutions as well as their autonomy from the state, hence the connection with the concept of autonomy. In this section of the semantic field, it is important to understand these developments in response to the communist rule that the countries have experienced prior to independence. As we have already observed in the overview of higher education development in Lithuania and Estonia, in the first wave of legislative reforms, a substantial degree of autonomy was granted to higher education institutions. Amsterdamski and Rhodes (1993) maintain that such was the case in most Central European countries as well:

> As we know, the focus of the new higher education legislation enacted in most Central European countries since 1989 has been to grant 'autonomy' to university senates, faculties and units within faculties by means of statutes. (…) The new legislation sought not to change

> the inner structures of institutions nor, for the most part, the structure of national systems, but was instead focused on the issue of 'autonomy' and internal democracy (p. 397).

This almost desperate need for democracy and autonomy came as a direct response to a high level of state control in the communist times and entailed "a categorical rejection of anything which might be considered reminiscent of the old system" (Cerych, 1995, p. 427). For instance, "any coordinating role of the state or any measure implying a reinforcement of rectors' competencies, however desirable these might be for greater effectiveness of the system, are looked upon with suspicion or strongly opposed because they recall the old centralism" (ibid, p. 427). Here, as in the passage from Kwiatkowski (1990) quoted above, the use of 'old' and 'new' creates an opposition. Communism does not emerge as a separate concept in contrast to democracy but there are echoes of it in such phrasings. The distinction between old democracies and new democracies also serves to stress the extent to which the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are different from the countries where democracy is 'old'.

5.2.3. Market economy

In the context of the region, it is rather difficult to distinguish between the concepts of democracy and market economy as the transition includes both, and discursively, there is no way for democracy to be conceived of without a working market economy and vice versa. That is, with regards to the transition, the concepts of democracy and market economy are overlapping. In terms of the higher education sector, market economy was perceived as the regulating factor in place of the rejected state-steering. The developing higher education sector was expected to meet the needs of the labour market as well as the expectations of the students in the emergence of the student-as-customer *topos*.

The two processes of economic and political shift are often mentioned together, such as in this statement from Hrabinská (1994):

> This concept [the Proposal of a Concept for Higher Education Development in the Slovak Republic by 2000 – M.O.] did introduce several new and progressive elements, which are in line with higher education development trends in the western democracies and could lead to greater flexibility and help to adapt higher education to the changed conditions of a market economy and an emerging democratic society (p. 58).

The ubiquitous and all-encompassing role of the market was expressed in several ways. On one hand, the transition to market economy impacted universities in terms of resources and state priorities. The importance of the market economy also led to the expectation that universities should serve the society, almost exclusively by meeting the needs of the developing labour market. On the other hand, this was the start of quite intense marketization of higher education: decentralization left a power vacuum and in the place of state-steering stepped the invisible hand of the market. This led to the development of the education market as such which was marked with increasing discourse on competition, evaluation, quality and efficiency. According to Farnes (1997), one of the views on the future of higher education is where:

> the development of private sector higher education is regarded as the main force for change. By providing *competition*, it encourages the public sector to become *more responsive to the needs of the market* and adopt innovative curricula and pedagogies. (…) It is argued that legislative reforms should *open the market for higher education*, subject to *quality assurance procedures* (p. 380).

Another facet of this development was the increasing commodification of higher education. Together with the discursive emergence of the education market, the discourse of higher education as a commodity being sold, is also being developed:

> According to many opinions, *higher education should be regarded as a commodity*, and state policy should give as many people as possible the opportunity to buy it, and regulate enrolment with its scholarship policy to different kinds of schools and faculties. (…) Such a provision would change students' as well as schools' mentality formed under the previous regime, and promote the *subordination* of programmes, curricula, and organisation to the *demands of the labour market*. (Amsterdamski & Rhodes, 1993, p. 393)

While the governance of higher education institutions shifted towards a very high degree of autonomy and decentralization after the first wave of reforms, the issue of higher education funding, in most cases, remained unsolved. The principle of state funding remained (largely because HEIs had very few other possible avenues of funding) but the rules and logic of its distribution were changing throughout the 1990s. Since all the former East Bloc countries had economic struggles during the transition, the state funding for higher education was limited, and the same levels of funding that were available prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, could not feasibly be maintained. Thus, if the state cannot afford to maintain the (in some cases, already enlarged) higher education sector, the introduction of market rules allows to bring relative extra funding to HEIs. This had the potential to work because the value of higher education was still comparatively high and the demand for it (especially, in the newly popular areas of management, law and other social sciences) was high. As Koucký and Černohorský (1996) note, "education has already become an *economic asset* in the Central European Countries, playing a role in determining prospects in the labour market" (p. 13).

Moreover, the market logic was assumed to work in more ways than one here. Čermáková et al. (1994) explain the dual purpose of the funding shift in the Czech Republic:

> However, the implementation of fees for studies is not only aimed at fundamental changes in the flow of funding. It is expected that *by paying fees, a student will feel more like a 'customer'* of the higher education institution and will *demand a high-quality education* (p. 81).

Thus, if education is a commodity and students are paying customers (or customers for which the state pays), it does not only change the mentality of the two parties. It fosters a transactional relationship wherein the students demand that their studies meet the needs of the labour market and HEIs have to meet these demands in order to get the money. The competition for students among the HEIs allows for students to become a market-based quality assurance mechanism. However, it still remains unclear what precisely high-quality education is understood to be (more on this in the section on the concept of quality). On the whole, the concept of market economy and its surrounding concepts also serve as a good entry point into a prominent discursive tendency of the period – a certain vagueness when it comes to the use of terms or concepts. While in some cases, there are more elaborate discussions, for instance, on what marks quality of higher education, in general, there is not a lot of precision. Cerych (1995) provides a very apt summary:

> The major difficulty arising in connection with the 'ideologies' factor seems the great imprecision and often vagueness of the different underlying doctrines. Starting with the concept of market economy, there is no clear consensus on its meaning and limits. The same is true on the notion of liberalism, which in most CEE countries guided the education reform process. We know that the content of this term varies widely from country to country (…) there is no general consensus on what exactly (or even broadly) liberalism means. Or rather, the term is subject to national and often individual interpretations (p. 430).

Given the extent to which market economy and liberalism was considered a guiding element of higher education at the time, this vagueness on its meaning is exceptionally stark. However, it also highlights a tendency of the higher education discourse at the time. As we will further see, the ephemeral quality of concepts or their rather empty conceptual load is not limited to market economy or liberalism. Here we can also see an instance of operationalisation – the vaguer the concept of market economy is, the easier it is to use the concept to, in this case, commodify and marketize higher education.

5.2.4. Reforms

One of the most education-related concepts in the period, reforms, complement the transition concept and is a continuation of its education-coded variation, 'transformation'. However, in terms of its conceptual load, it is quite transitional itself. *Reforms*, thus, allow for other concepts to come to fruition. In practical terms, reforms are also heavily conditioned by the other aspects of transition taking place:

> This process is not of course isolated from the overall transition process. To a large extent, the globality and speed of education reforms have their roots in the general climate of rapid and radical change which CEE societies are undergoing: their transition to a market economy, to a pluralistic democracy, decentralisation and so on. Thus, education reform is not only paralleled, but largely motivated and triggered by reforms in other sectors and by the general liberalisation of the system. (Cerych, 1995, p. 424)

The example above also shows how the concept of reforms is already connected to the concepts of transition, market economy and democracy. The discourse on reforms is rather evaluative in character as the discussion of reforms themselves are superseded by evaluations of whether the reforms have been successfully implemented. Even though the statements are full of caveats, the struggles are more discursively prominent than the successes. The early wave of reforms which was marked by decentralisation and increased autonomy of the higher education institutions have been largely considered accomplished by the early to mid-1990s, however, their results were criticised for not having achieved much:

> …the lack of significant structural transformation is common to all reform programmes. The new legislation sought not to change the inner structures of institutions nor, for the most part, the structure of national systems, but was instead focused on the issue of 'autonomy'

> and internal democracy. Inadvertently, this created a strong inertia in favour of maintaining the 'old structures' of higher education. (Amsterdamski & Rhodes, 1993, p. 397)

Here we also see the unfulfilled expectation of transformation. As discussed above, transformation implies a radical change of shape or structure and the higher education reforms were expected to transform the higher education systems or institutions. Yet, that did not happen to the extent expected by the experts at the time.

While the concept of reforms was conditioned by the concepts of transition, democracy and market economy, it was also itself a condition for the concept of quality and its surrounding concepts:

> Many Central and Eastern European countries seem to have arrived at a crossroads five years after revolutionary changes. It is not excluded that the goals of decentralisation and local autonomy will survive the 1990s only in those countries which are able to elaborate the new control mechanisms that are appropriate to the decentralised context. The key words of administrative reform in these countries will probably be evaluation, monitoring, accreditation, quality assurance and public accountability. (Halász, 1996, p. 61)

The passage above discusses the possible further reforms in the region, as a response to the issues raised by decentralisation. The connection between quality and reforms is also underscored in statements that those opposing reforms are those who are afraid of evaluation because their performance is lacking: "Interested in reforms are mainly those who are not afraid of competition and of evaluation of their educational or research record by the same criteria of competence and excellence as those operating in open science and education systems" (Amsterdamski & Rhodes, 1993, p. 383). This already illustrates that the concept of quality (here referred to linguistically as excellence) is connected to the concept of evaluation and hints at the criteria of evaluation being derived from the "open science and education systems" which as we will later see refers to an international dimension of the concept of quality.

5.2.5. Quality

Ubiquitous and difficult to define, quality also emerges as a kind of a negative space[5] concept in the sense that the lack of quality is expressed more

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[5] Empty or subordinate space surrounding an object of perception, conceived in terms of its aesthetic effect. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition, 2022. HarperCollins Publishers. https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=negative+space

clearly than its positive conception. In the discourse of Central and Eastern European higher education of the 1990s, quality is, first and foremost, aspirational and the concept is largely future-oriented. Several texts somewhat explicitly discuss the criteria of quality, however, the discussions of evaluation and what the quality of CEE higher education should be measured against, are more prominent. In the beginning of the period, the more common linguistic referent as in the example quoted above is 'excellence' but the word 'quality' is also used.

The 'negative space' is exemplified by the various references to presumed or existing lack of quality, for instance: "They said such education [shorter forms of higher education oriented towards practical skills – M. O.] would be of lower quality, arguing that its development would be the result of political decisions – an attempt to compete with western higher education institutions" (Hrabinská, 1994, p. 51) or "The process [of unification of several smaller colleges] may strengthen local communities but this is more likely to be in terms of their social and political power than in terms of research and teaching quality" (Grzelak, 1993, p. 418).

Another layer to the concept of quality is already market-mediated as the discourse on quality also includes the concepts of performance and (in)effectiveness. Consider the following segments: "Within the whole system there were no incentives for *better performance* of higher education institutions" (Čermáková et al., 1994, p. 77); "The fact that, on average, 10 percent of the unemployed people in these countries have higher education degrees and that many graduates have great difficulties in finding jobs is already proof of the *inefficiency of the higher education curriculum*" (Serban, 1996, p. 29); "Conventional teaching is regarded as *inefficient, inflexible and often of poor quality*. The new paradigm could lead to the transformation of higher education and result in a flexible, mixed mode quality system capable of serving a diversity of students" (Farnes, 1997, p. 389). While the three segments discuss the funding of HEIs, the development of curriculum, and the teaching methods respectively, a perceived lack of quality expressed as poor performance or inefficiency is the connecting thread in all of them.

The examples above already point to one of the elements of quality that is present in the discourse, that is, meeting the needs of the market or the society. Conceptually, there is more focus on the market, even if it is sometimes phrased as meeting societal demands. For instance, in an article titled "The Quest for Quality in a Country in Change: The Hungarian Case" (Gordos, 1991), the author states that:

> The social impact of universities is the basis for evaluating their role in different types of societies; in transitional societies, the attempt

> must be made to bring the aspirations of youth for better education into line with the needs of society, at least in certain disciplines. The society demands a proper balance in its graduates between the acquisition of basic knowledge, a long-term value, and creative work, and more immediate objectives (p. 55).

And then in the next paragraph immediately adds that "Quality expresses, among other things, the coincidence between training received and corresponding employment" (ibid, p. 55). The list of education developments in Central and Eastern Europe, according to one of the texts, includes the "concern to satisfy the demands of a market economy as it rapidly spreads into every sphere of society", the imperative of "training a new type of labor capable of adapting rapidly to the needs of employment" as well as "the critical role of the market in validation of the skills acquired in the education system" (Zachariev, 1999, p. 26). The argumentative frame here is that the needs of a society which is either transitioning or has already transitioned to a market-economy would be primarily, if not exclusively, market-based.

Another explicit aspect of quality is the importance of academic research. This aspect should be considered in the context of the structural issues of the time. During the Soviet rule, the research and teaching have been separated into academies and universities respectively and one of the proposed structural reforms of the 1990s was to bring the unity of teaching and research back to universities. Hence, the importance of research to the concept of quality is largely limited to the earlier texts in the corpus, with the exception of the issues of performance and evaluation. Kwiatkowski (1990) strikes a particularly programmatic tone in stressing that the excellence of university stems precisely from research: "There seems to be one unequivocal condition on which the 'club nature' [university conceptualised as a social club – M. O.] of the university in this specific sense is based – excellence, i.e. *excellence stemming from research understood as creation and dissemination of knowledge*" (p. 395). Given the context that, at the time, in Poland (which is the focus of Kwiatkowski's article) research was performed mostly in academies and not in universities, this conceptualisation of quality is particularly aspirational. Research is also included in the most elaborate conceptualisation of quality in the corpus by Gordos (1991):

> Research and education also come together in the university, the one proposing to extend the frontiers of knowledge and the other to transmit that knowledge. A quality education is inseparable from research, as evidenced by the past of numerous institutions, and research, even when carried out independently, is another form of teaching provided to young scientists (p. 53).

The author further proposes a concept of “tridimensional excellence”, which presupposes that “the universities’ academic quality must be recognized by: the society outside the university world (world-country-region-community); the international academic condition as a locus of education; the international academic community as the sponsor of research” (ibid, p. 55). All three dimensions include a global or international element (world society, international academic condition and international academic community) and this leads to another important layer of the concept of quality in this semantic field. Already in 1990–2000 we can observe that meeting international standards, that is, becoming more as ‘the international’ is conceptualised as a marker of quality. Another aspect exemplified by Gordos’ model is the positioning of the international community in the role of a sponsor which will be further discussed in the following section on international cooperation.

5.2.6. International cooperation

The concept of internationalisation itself is most commonly linguistically expressed in terms such as international cooperation or international collaboration as well as in using names of various international activities, e.g., mobility or exchange, foreign-language curricula and similar. In the corpus, internationalisation is only named as such very rarely, often in the context of new trends or developments that the higher education systems have to contend with. Only one article explicitly discusses internationalisation: Serban (1996) provides an overview of international cooperation in Eastern European higher education. She also aptly observes that:

> At present, the concept of internationalization is used in many different contexts and the intensity of the activities involved varies enormously. This concept is new within the context of Eastern European higher education and carries specific objectives that, so far, have been only partially pursued or clarified (p. 24).

Here, thus, we can extend Cerych’s (1995) argument quoted above in the sense that just as with market economy or liberalism, there is a lack of even a broad consensus of what internationalisation means and entails. That is not particularly surprising, given that the concept was just entering Eastern Europe and it was still in its earlier stages of development in the West. Even though the concept of internationalisation itself may have been elusive at the time, the international dimension of higher education was still an important element of the discourse. As we have seen above, it was already conceived of as an indicator of higher education quality. This was also conveyed via the notion of international (or Western) standards which were referenced both in relation to international cooperation and the broader reforms of higher education: “The reforms are also characterized (…) by the concern to move further in the direction of the forms, standards, and results of education in Western Europe” (Zachariev, 1999, p. 34); “the desire to catch up with international academic standards [has] (…) led to embarking on the development of international cooperation in various aspects related to higher education” (Serban, 1996, p. 20).

In the given context, internationalisation is primarily conceptualised as international cooperation or collaboration and academic mobility or exchange. While the use of the different terms is not uniform, a certain tendency to use cooperation to refer to inter-university activities and collaboration, to activities involving national or supranational institutions or programmes can be observed. The latter term is also more closely associated with assistance since various aid programmes are discussed under the heading of international collaboration and the phrases ‘international collaboration and assistance’ or ‘international assistance and collaboration’ are used.

In its use, international cooperation serves as the linguistic substitute for the concept of internationalisation as it subsumes the broadest spectrum of international activities. These include the development of branch universities, wherein Western universities would open their branch campuses in the Central and Eastern European countries, the transfer of study programmes from partner universities, as well as the provision of bilingual or foreign-language curricula, also often developed with the involvement of foreign partners. Higher education institutions which operated according to this model, often under the open university label, commonly collected fees from students and focused on subjects such as management or business education. Their legal status differed among the countries. For instance, the City University in Bratislava opened in 1990 as a branch of City University in Bellevue, USA, provided courses in Slovak, English, German and French and received funding from American foundations but did not have the status of a higher education institution (Hrabinská, 1994). The Polish Open University, established in conjunction with the Netherlands, the UK and Greece and initially funded by a TEMPUS grant, provided a study programme of business education transferred from the UK and localised to the Polish context; it was accredited by the Polish government to confer Polish degrees (Hazell, 1997).

The vast majority of international activities discussed in the corpus is related to mobility, either of staff or students. Short-term mobility is significantly more common as is outgoing mobility rather than incoming. Generally, student mobility is discussed more vaguely than staff mobility, often just in passing, mentioned as one of the opportunities that should be provided for the students. The discourse on mobility and academic exchange is twofold. On one hand, international exchange is seen as a means to improve the higher education institutions and aid the transition process at large. On the other, there is a certain wariness since exchange can hardly be much more than intellectual tourism for the incoming academics or a spring board for the Eastern Europeans to permanently move to a Western university, associated with the phenomenon of brain drain observed in the higher education sectors of the region throughout the 1990s.

The positive aspects of the various international cooperation and exchange programmes (TEMPUS, PHARE) as well as bilateral endeavours were related to the knowledge transfer that was necessary for the HEIs in the region to reach the international standards mentioned above as well as to build capacity to aid the general process of economic and social transition:

> It is difficult to overestimate the impact of TEMPUS on reforms in the HE system [in Poland – M. O.], on methods of teaching, curricula, etc. Equally significant have been a variety of effects which result from student and teacher exchanges. These effects include the acquisition of knowledge and skills within one's professional field, learning about various teaching methods and the use of modern technology. Such contacts also facilitate mutual understanding and friendship, broaden the meaning of international identity and foster awareness of similarity of interests rather than conflict of interests. (Grzelak, 1993, p. 415)

The role of international cooperation was considered especially meaningful in the capacity building for education managers since the transition into market-based provision of higher education demanded new skills and competences that they did not have:

> … reforms concerning the quality of management of education have to be stressed. This concerns principally training of educational managers and administrators at all levels (…) They all need new competences and skills which were more or less absent in the past. Great efforts have been made in this direction, often with the support of external, multilateral and bilateral agencies, and include intensive courses and seminars, study visits to schools and central or local authorities abroad, participation in international programmes (…) (Cerych, 1997, p. 89).

The main issues with international cooperation and exchange were related to losing academics to Western countries with whom exchange was conducted and the unilateral approach of cooperation. Both were somewhat inevitable given the economic situation at the time but their existence in the discourse is important because it shows that while indeed very much appreciated, international endeavours were not always viewed through rose-tinted glasses. Brain drain is considered a serious issue, however, one not likely to be solved: "another serious problem is the danger of a massive brain drain. (…) Study abroad programmes and student exchange schemes are used not only to broaden experience, but also as a first step to a more promising labour market" (Želvys, 1997, p. 18). The only solution (and its feasibility was very dubious at the time) proposed is "the creation of such prerequisites (not only financial) for education and research which would be comparable with those existing abroad" (Amsterdamski & Rhodes, 1993, p. 395).

The calls for mutuality in cooperation, while reasonable and substantiated, sound a little empty in the context of the comparatively dominant position of the concept of assistance. Expressed also via the notions of aid, support, and help, the concept of assistance permeates the entire discourse on Central and Eastern European higher education, but is particularly salient when international cooperation is discussed, partly due to the proximity of assistance and international collaboration, but also because, in effect, all international activities were funded externally. Since the public funding for universities (as for the entire public sector) was decreasing in the majority of countries, they could hardly initiate international exchanges or projects. This made the already imbalanced relationship shift even further to one side. Coupled with the perceived backwardness of the Eastern European higher education systems, real issues and deficits, and the narratives of catching up, international cooperation became a one-way street with a very clear distinction between the donors and the benefactors:

> Immediately after 1989, virtually all CEE countries were submerged by foreign advisers, teams of experts from different international organisations, representatives of foundations, of numerous Western universities and the like. (…) Overall, however, the mottoes (or slogans?) 'return to Europe' and 'catching-up' did reflect a key force influencing the reform process, helped significantly by several large assistance programmes and especially the European Union's PHARE and TEMPUS schemes. (Cerych, 1995, p. 433)

One unifying element that all of the donors and helpers shared was the geographical and somewhat mythological space they came from – the West. Not always explicitly stated, but implied without exception was the fact that the assistance came from the West and that said assistance would, in the end, help Central and Eastern Europe become (more like) the West.

5.2.7. Europe

As we have already seen in the construction of the concept of Eastern Europe itself in the last decade of the 20th century, there is a clear distinction drawn between 'this Europe' and 'that Europe'. Higher education, it seems, was exceptionally susceptible to the narratives of 'catch up' and 'return to Europe'. The international standards mentioned above were without exception Western and the reference systems into which the reformers were looking for inspiration were all located in the West: almost exclusively in Western Europe, but some examples from Australia or the United States were also indicated. In their commentary of the results of a cross-country survey of Central and Eastern Europe education experts Amsterdamski and Rhodes (1993) observe:

> not one responder in any country made reference to discussions and solutions adopted in neighbouring countries of the region, even when these solutions or proposals were in accordance with his or her own opinion. (…) However, almost all responders discussed at length the possibilities of adopting German, French, British or American models (p. 384).

In line with the modernization theory, the 50 years of communist rule were seen as a disturbance that impacted the natural development of Eastern Europe, first, in terms of its societies and cultures: "the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union artificially altered its natural culture towards that of a communist society and its path back into a European culture can be traced from where it has recently emerged" (Roffe, 1996, p. 115). The possible developments of education systems were conceptualised in the same line of thought. A prominent *topos* in the discourse was that Eastern Europe was always inevitably bound to develop into something resembling the West but the communist rule stopped that. Now that the obstacle is removed, Eastern Europe shall continue on this path:

> the new Eastern European governments must re-integrate their higher education systems *into Europe*. Higher education in the region has always had its Western traditions (mostly German, but also Italian and French). The dictatorships who took power after World War II reduced those ties and established strong links with the Soviet Union. (Kozma, 1990, p. 389)

The quote above illustrates this point precisely. What is also noteworthy is the stated necessity, indeed, an obligation, for the governments of Eastern European countries to reintegrate their higher education systems "into Europe". Linguistically, this sounds illogical because as the name implies

Eastern Europe *is* Europe, so, by definition, it cannot be “re-integrated” into something it already is. However, this is not a statement that would have raised eyebrows at the time. Various rhetorical means were found to indicate the ‘otherness’ of Eastern Europe, starting from the ‘new Europe’ which was already observed in the construction of the concept of Eastern Europe discussed in the previous section; the distinction was also underscored by the use of ‘two Europes’ or, most explicitly, ‘the other Europe’. International activities (internationalisation) was conceptualised as a path for Eastern Europe to lose its ‘otherness’:

> While the threat of a return of Communism has disappeared since the collapse of the Soviet system, *the ‘Other Europe’* is still not safe from nationalist excesses. In this perspective it is vital to encourage supranational approaches (…) To head off any temptation to return to a closed society, we must encourage the development of a European university network, such as existed in the 17th and 18th centuries. (Rupnik, 1992, p. 150)

The distinction between Eastern and Western Europes was not only drawn in terms of education which we have seen in the concepts discussed above. Since the political changes were largely brought on by national movements opposing, among other things, the suppression of national identities of the communist era, there were concerns about presumed increasing nationalism among these states as we can see in the example quoted above. Thus, internationalisation was perceived as a way to both improve education and introduce the more global, less nationalist cultural approaches dominant in the West at the time. For instance, Serban (1996) observes that “international collaboration between the two Europes and the rest of the world is a cultural and educational challenge” (p. 29). Note that ‘cultural’ precedes ‘educational’ and implies that the process of internationalisation was considered more cultural than educational. This quote also illustrates that there was a prominent European element in the conceptualisation of internationalisation. International cooperation with other countries almost exclusively entailed other European (ergo, Western European) countries.

The goals of internationalisation as well as other changes in the Eastern European education systems, thus, were only partially concerned with education. The aspirations to join the European Union and NATO which all the countries shared in the 1990s, coupled with ample involvement and financial support from the EU institutions and programmes, permeated the discourse on education as well. In an article discussing civic education in Latvia and its development in cooperation with institutions from the United States, another goal of international cooperation in this area is stated explicitly: "Latvians increasingly desire to become part of the West and to seek security and prosperity through membership in European transnational institutions. To achieve this objective, Latvia must continue its transition to democracy" (John & Valts, 1997, p. 30). Crucial in this statement is the use of 'become part of the West' and 'to seek security' which shows that becoming part of the West was considered a *conditio sine qua non* to ensure the security of these countries. Education was seen as a way to do that and internationalisation was one of the methods to ensure its success.

Kozma (1990) argued that "the transformation of East European education into a European one" was "a political process which must precede the academic and educational transformation, and has to go hand in hand with the present reforms in Eastern and Central Europe" (p. 390). The aspirations of the Eastern European states were intensified by the approach of the EU to influence the Eastern European education more heavily than in the member states of the time: "while Member States of the Community [the European Community was replaced by the European Union with the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 – M. O.] are fiercely defending their own right to establish a content and methods of national education, the Community is recommending quite a different approach to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe" (Želvys, 1997, p. 18). Thus, the expectation for the East to become West was noticeable on both sides of the European divide.

As a result, in the period from 1990 to 2000, higher education was something of a supporting character in a story about itself. In a discourse heavily influenced by the 'catch-up' variation of the modernization theory and the 'otherness' of Eastern Europe, the quality of higher education was measured according to how much it resembled the higher education systems of the West. Internationalisation, thus, was conceptualised as a means to, first, learn what aspects were available for transfer, second, acquire funding to facilitate the changes and, third, ensure the sustainability of the social and cultural processes which were believed to ensure the acceptance of Eastern Europe into the aspirational 'Europe'.

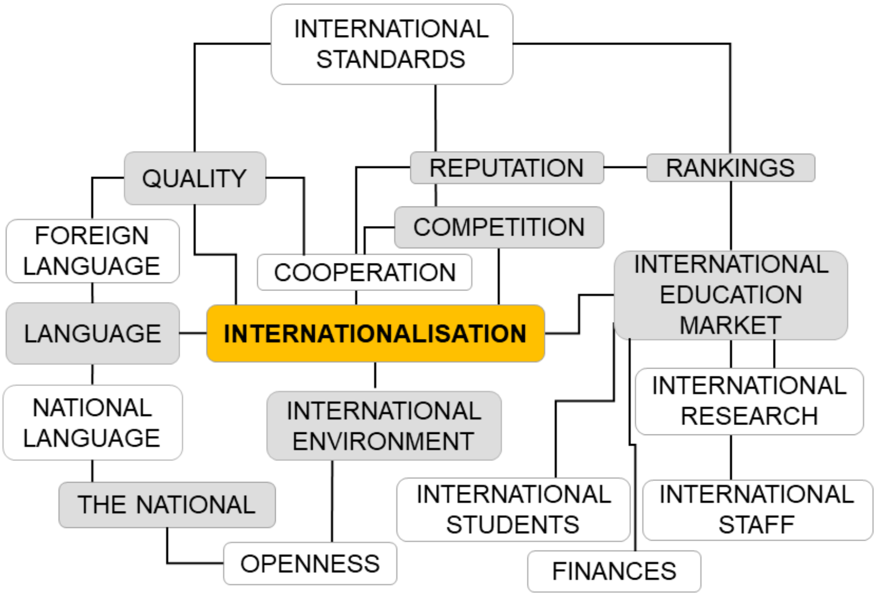

Figure 6. *Semantic field of internationalisation in University documents in Lithuania and Estonia from 2000–2020*

The second time period under analysis paints a somewhat different picture. By 2020, internationalisation has been firmly established as one of the focal points of higher education discourse, in both Lithuanian and Estonian contexts. Even though, the state of internationalisation is different in the two countries, as discussed in Chapter 3, the data from two universities is not contradictory, but rather supplemental. As can be seen from the figure above (Figure 6), the semantic field of internationalisation is significantly expanded at this point and includes a variety of concepts, some of which have already been observed in the 1990–2000 period. However, the majority of the concepts are new and those that have been observed previously also come with a slightly different conceptual load, that is, their meanings have partially shifted. In the following chapter, we will discuss the concepts and their semantic content to elaborate on the discursive architecture of the concept of internationalisation in the two universities of Eastern Europe during the period from 2000 to 2020.

5.3.1. Competition

The concept of competition is present in nearly all of the documents in the corpus. The two universities are conceptualised as being in competition with others; however, the specific objective of this competition—what exactly they are competing for—is rarely explicitly named. At this point, competition is conceptualised as a natural way of being for universities, the use of the concept is so ubiquitous as to make competition seem 'natural'. The mission for the University of Tartu (UT) Internationalisation strategy adopted in 2004 is formulated as such: "To raise the academic standard of the university in both research and education by developing international activity in all fields and strengthening the university's *internationally competitive profile*" (UT Internationalisation strategy, 2004, p. 1). A similar note is struck in the earliest internationalisation document at Vilnius University (VU) as well:

> The aim of this plan is to maintain the high level of competitiveness of Vilnius University in order to ensure that Vilnius University remains the best research and study institution in Lithuania, a leader among universities in the Baltic States and one of the best research and study institutions in Central and Eastern Europe. (Plan for Strengthening International Activities, 2009, p. 1)

While the 'for what' of the competition is implied, the 'with whom' is usually spelled out very clearly. In the example above, the competition is delineated along the national (best in Lithuania) and two regional axes (leader in the Baltic States and one of the best in Central and Eastern Europe). The 'naturalness' of competition is also underscored by the use of verbs 'strengthen' and 'maintain' both of which imply that the competitiveness already exists and only needs to be either strengthened or maintained. It is curious that the strategy of UT presumes a forward motion with the raising of standards and the strengthening of the competitive profile, while the VU plan uses the word 'strengthening' in the title but the aims are formulated in a way that suggests the preservation of the positively-coded status quo rather than improving on it.

Later examples show that the aspirations for competition have grown in both cases. The introduction to the latest UT Strategic plan sets out an ambitious aim:

> The university is consistently moving closer to the best universities of Europe and the world and has set itself a direct aim to reach the level of strong Nordic universities that, based on international rankings, belong to the top 100 universities in the world in 15 to 20 years. (UT Strategic Plan 2021–2025, 2020, p. 5)

The scope of competition has also been increased for VU as the regional aspirations have been replaced with competition at the European and global level: “We will strengthen our international reputation in order to establish Vilnius University as a place of science and studies on the European and global university map” (VU Strategic Plan, 2020, p. 5).

We will come back later to the ‘compete *for* what’ but the ‘compete *in* what’ is somewhat implied by the use of ‘science and studies’ in the previous example. In terms of wording, the Lithuanian legal framework fosters the use of such formulation as the activities of higher education are divided into studies and research (or science) as per the Law on Higher Education and Research[6]. The discourse shows that the universities are, in effect, competing in how well they perform their activities and internationalisation (or at least a very broadly conceptualised international dimension) is a way to improve their odds.

At VU, the aim of one of the priority areas of internationalisation is “to increase the competitiveness of study programmes and to internationalise their content” (Guidelines for Internationalisation, 2019, p. 4), while the “international competitiveness of research” is expected to be increased, among other things, by strengthening “the competencies of researchers to successfully participate and lead in international project activities and networking, (…) [and creating] an international research environment by bringing together highly qualified researchers” (VU Strategic Plan, 2020, p. 4). These examples underscore the international nature of the competition and indicates that in the recent documents, the competitive focus is placed on international competition rather than the national and regional aspirations of the first decade of the 2000s.

UT explicitly conceptualises internationalism[7] as one of the competitive advantages of the university: “our competitive advantages include internationalism, high-quality studies and research and diversity” (UT Strategic Plan, 2020, p. 4). One of the common pillars of internationalisation – international cooperation – is also viewed through the lens of competition:

[6] The official translation is ‘The Law on Higher Education and Research’, however the verbatim translation is ‘The Law on Science and Studies’. This eventually results in a variety of English terms used to refer to the education and research in Lithuanian higher education.

[7] In the University documents ‘internationalism’ or ‘internationality’ commonly refers to the state of *being* international, whereas ‘internationalisation’ is used to refer to the actions and processes that *make* the university international. I presume that this might come from the lack of a corresponding term for internationalisation in the national language (at least, that seems to be the case for Lithuanian) and is a result of a double-translation when ‘internationalisation’ is translated into the national languages and then back to English.

"to be successful in international competition, we offer attractive working and learning opportunities, also by cooperating with partner institutions, and thereby increase the effectiveness of teaching and research at the university" (ibid, p. 7).

The concept of competition is applied not only to universities as institutions and its activities; its discursive scope is expanded to members of the university community. In a strategic document on internationalisation at UT, it is claimed that the university: "1.4. ensures the competitiveness of its graduates in the labour market (…) 1.5. enhances the competitiveness of its members, prepares students for work and communication in multicultural environment" (Internationalisation goals and strategic directions, 2014). The same line is followed again in the UT Strategic Plan (2020): "We develop curricula so that they increase the competitiveness of graduates to pursue studies in the best universities of the world and ensure the ability to cope successfully on the labour market" (p. 7) This again illustrates that competition is a well-established concept in the higher education of the period and its connection to internationalisation comes from the international activities are beneficial in terms competition *topos*.

5.3.2. Reputation

Another concept closely related to competition is the concept of reputation. It is conceptualised not strictly as a goal of competition but more as a measure of whether the results of competition are satisfactory. Both universities refer to existing and aspirational reputation in the internationalisation documents as well as in the more general strategic plans. Moreover, the Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia's Higher Education (2007), signed by UT among others, states that participating institutions "shall strive to build a reputation for Estonia as a country that provides internationally recognised and acclaimed, high quality higher education" (p. 1). When the concept of reputation is used to refer to an existing attribute, it is linguistically expressed through the term "recognition". For instance, among the measures listed in the UT Internationalisation strategy (2004) and the VU Plan for strengthening international activities (2009) are the endeavours to "increase recognition of UT's brand through the publication of international research journals" (p. 1) and "to preserve the high level of recognition of Vilnius University" (p. 11).

In the most recent documents, the concept of reputation is almost exclusively conceptualised as *international* reputation. The VU Strategic Plan (2020) refers to both international reputation of the university as well as international recognition of research (following the pattern of using 'recognition' to refer to a specific established element). The UT Strategic Plan (2020) also refers to activities which "increase the international reputation of our strong research areas" (p. 9). Moreover, internationalisation is again conceptualised as a way to grow said reputation of universities. Increase of reputation is only referred to in the University of Tartu Internationalisation goals and strategic directions for 2015–2020 (2014). However, in VU's Guidelines for Internationalisation of Teaching and Learning (2019) internationalisation is described as "a mean[s] of improving quality that, if implemented successfully, not only improves the overall study quality at the University, but also *grows the University's reputation*" (p. 2). This statement directly relates the concept of internationalisation with the concept of reputation, conceived of as international reputation, in the sense that internationalisation is employed to grow the reputation of the university.

5.3.3. Rankings

A third concept in this related area is rankings. It is related to the concepts of competition and reputation in that it represents the measurable aspects of the two. The actions of the UT Internationalisation strategy (2004) are claimed to "support the goal set forth in UT's research and development strategy of joining the top hundred European research universities" (p. 1). International rankings are also listed among the indicators for the VU Plan for Strengthening International Activities (2009). While in the earlier documents the rankings are mostly aspirational, in the later period the concept of rankings serves a dual function. On one hand, it remains a guiding achievement for development. The vision for the university listed in the VU Strategic Plan for 2018–2020 is "*to rank* among the leading universities in Europe" (p. 1). The TU Strategic Plan for 2021–2025 (2020) entails an ambitious ranking-measured goal:

> The university is consistently moving closer to the best universities of Europe and the world and has set itself a direct aim to reach the level of strong Nordic universities that, *based on international rankings*, belong to the top 100 universities in the world in 15 to 20 years (p. 5).

It is noteworthy that the less precise formulation of "the top hundred European research universities" used in 2004, by 2020 has transformed into "based on international rankings, belong to the top 100 universities in the world" (the Europe/world aspect will be discussed in the section on international standards). While the ranking may have been implied in the earlier document, it is explicit in the recent document. As is the case with reputation, rankings are also almost exclusively collocated with 'international'. In the cases where only 'rankings' is used, the international element is heavily implied.

The only case of national rankings being evoked is in the VU Plan for Strengthening International Activities (2009) and even then, the national rankings are used in conjunction with international rankings: "Vilnius University is the best research and study institution in Lithuania by many indicators. This is reflected not only in the ranking of universities in Lithuania, but also in international rankings" (p. 10). The phrase is formulated in a way that evokes two different rankings with the use of determiners "rankings (…) in Lithuania" and "international rankings". The double use, however, indicates that in 2009, the concept of rankings could still refer to both national and international ones, that is, rankings was not conceptually coded as necessarily international. This illustrates the change in the conceptual load of *rankings*.

The development that lead to the conceptualisation of rankings as international enabled the connection between internationalisation and rankings as well. In the later period, we can see that rankings effectively lost the potentiality of national rankings in the university discourse as it could only be conceived of as international. Moreover, they are no longer only aspirational but are also used to underscore the university's achievements to date. For instance, the UT Strategic Plan (2020) notes that the university "is the leading research university in Estonia and the only Estonian-language universitas in the world that has been declared the best university of New Europe[8]" (p. 4) and a note from the Rector in VU's Strategic Plan (2020) claims "We strive for a national leadership in all academic fields and are able to be among the top 400 universities in the world" (p. 2). The two universities participate in different rankings and the references are made to the Times Higher Education ranking and the QS University rankings respectively. The relationship between internationalisation and rankings is not expressed straightforwardly, however, the re-conceptualisation of rankings as inherently international points to a discursive shift in the conceptualisation of the area in which university activities take place.

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[8] New Europe refers to the states that have joined the European Union since 2004. See https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/best-universities-new-europe-ranking-2018

5.3.4. International education market

The concept of international education market includes several concepts in its cluster which are traditionally considered elements of internationalisation and correspond to the main activities of universities: international research, international staff and international students. It also includes the concept of finances and it is this concept that hints at the specific conceptualisation of research and education in this case. The discourse which surrounds international education market reflects the marketization of university education. In this discourse, research and education are conceptualised as commodities which can be sold on the market to obtain finances, and students are re-conceptualised as customers, that is, potential buyers.

As opposed to the previous concepts, this concept is not explicitly named in the corpus but it can be gleaned from the use of words such as advertising or marketing, used in several internationalisation-related documents. This reconceptualization is illustrated in the Report on International Studies (2015) developed at VU: "As globalisation has intensified, internationality of studies has become synonymous with quality, since the fundamentally changed logic of the competitive marketplace has created new and unique challenges" (p. 3). This also shows the 'where' of the competition that the universities participated in. As the document indicates, due to increasing globalisation the market has become international rather than local. The authors go as far as to describe this shift as a "fundamentally changed logic". The international education market is also hinted at when the expanded opportunities of the education provided by the university is discussed: "The university provides students with a developing international learning environment that opens world opportunities and the possibility to acquire additional skills and knowledge by studying abroad everywhere in the world" (UT Strategic Plan, 2020, p. 5).

Discursively, a certain reluctance to admit the conceptualisation of education as a commodity is observed as none of the strategic plans or other documents at least partially intended for outside consumption indicate this conceptualisation straightforwardly. There are several mentions of marketing in University of Tartu's internationalisation documents, such as "employ active marketing measures for internationally advertising UT and the opportunities for study here in languages other than Estonian" (UT Internationalisation strategy, 2004, p. 2) or "the university aims to admit the best students from around the world, planning its marketing activities in the target markets chosen in cooperation with the state" (Language and internationalisation principles, 2020, p. 2). These documents, however, were still translated and published on the official website of the university which allows to expect a certain level of involvement from the public relations department.

This, however, is not the case with internal documents developed at Vilnius University. Here, the transformation of international students into potential well-paying customers is obvious. For instance, the Plan for Strengthening International Activities (2009) lists an objective to "develop and implement an active study marketing programme to attract self-funded international students" (p. 11) and the Report on Internationalisation (2015) indicates that the university should "decide which programmes could be the most competitive on the international market" (p. 10). The conceptualisation of education as a product being sold on the (international) market is even more prominent in the focus groups as the informants could be more candid than a written text would allow. For instance, one of the informants was very straightforward in describing what internationalisation means to them: "this [international education – M. O.] is a service from which you want to make a profit, and then you understand that to be international is to think that the market is actually everywhere, not just in Lithuania" (Focus groups, 2018).

Many discussions in the focus groups revolved around the issues of financing daily activities of the university, funding for international activities (or lack thereof) as well as how internationalisation can financially benefit the university. Developing international study programmes (taught in English), often on the basis of struggling current study programmes, was conceptualised as a way to attract international students and ensure the sustainability of the programme or the entire department. This was directly related to the growing competition and internationalisation was described several times as a means of survival:

> internationalisation to me seems to be a means, because the competition between universities is becoming global, because sometimes, if it is global, some universities may no longer be getting enough students domestically, or the level of competition is too high within the country and they are expanding their markets outwards, and in this case internationalisation is not a goal, but a means to survive, because education and research are becoming a very competitive environment to continue to be successful and to get students (Focus groups, 2018).

The debate was not unanimous and, a degree of reluctance was noticeable with regards to this conceptualisation. In some conversations, the informants commiserated that the pricing for international students was too high and good students who had already been accepted, relinquished their places because the studies were too expensive. There were also proposals to reconsider the managing of funds in the university and accept additional international students free of charge if the costs of the study programme would not be significantly increased. The discussions on international students also included a subtle element of fairness. Since the majority of local students would be state-funded and it was maintained that only the best and most talented international students were accepted to the university, why do the international students have to pay? As both groups of students are selected based on merit, the informants implied, they should be treated as equals.

Overall, international students were conceptualised quite ambiguously and in contradicting ways. On one hand, these students were seen as a source of revenue and a marketing opportunity to successfully compete in the international education market. On the other, the competition among the students who would apply to the two universities was underscored in various documents. Both universities are only expecting the most talented, motivated and otherwise ‘best’ students to apply. The UT Strategic Plan (2020) claims “We admit students of high potential to study in our international curricula” and the VU Guidelines for Internationalisation (2019) state that “Targeted international marketing is conducted to ensure that the University attracts and admits motivated and able students from abroad” and that “scholarships are available for exceptionally talented foreign (non-EU) students to partially or fully cover their tuition fees” (p. 4). This assumption, however, was contradicted by the focus groups participants. They maintained that Vilnius University is not actually able to attract the best of the students and that the issue was not so much international students as such but rather the level of students: “it is important for me to have strong students. Whether they are Lithuanians, Syrians, or Chinese, it is all the same to me” (Focus group (2), 2018). Even though the official discourse is that the university attracts the best students, informants argue that the competition is fiercer *for* the students rather than *among* them and that the university fails in this competition:

> We need to stop talking about the Ivy League. We don't have Ivy League students anymore; they leave on their own after the 12th grade. We are no longer a third-sigma university. We are cutting off the statistical top, but not the very top. (...) In a word, we are only taking in our [Lithuanian – M. O.] students at the moment. And only the ones above average, but not the best, far from it. Those students go abroad straight away and achieve something there. (Focus groups, 2018)

In a competition-based higher education funding system, the loss of national students to foreign universities in the international education market represents not only a setback from a national development point of view but is also a tangible loss of revenue. Focus group participants generally expressed dissatisfaction with the university's official discourse on this matter, which they perceived as inaccurate.

Another element of the international education market is international research and the researchers that participate in it. University of Tartu describes its students and staff as "form[ing] an able and motivated international community whose teaching, research and development activities are at an internationally excellent level" (Language and internationalisation principles, 2020, p. 1). While research is understood as one of the primary activities of a university, international research and researchers in particular are also conceptualised as a selling point in the international education market as well as a separate source of revenue. To the latter point, a connection between funding and international activities is made in the UT Strategic plan (2020): "participation of the university as a strong partner in international research cooperation (…) helps to bring in additional competition-based resources from international cooperation programmes" (p. 4). As the revenue is obtained from research and not studies (ergo, students), this connection is made quite explicitly and not in a roundabout way which was present in the case of international students.

International research is also conceptualised as a tool for marketing purposes to increase the universities standing in the market with regards to attracting said students. University of Tartu Strategic Plan (2020) states that "the stronger the research activities of the university, the more solid and attractive the instruction provided by the university" (p. 4). The key word here is 'attractive' which implies that there is a need to attract someone and creates the conceptualisation of research as a tool for this purpose. Research is also one of the activities that the universities compete in and this competition is conceptualised as international. International research and international students are also referred to in the discourse surrounding another relatively elusive concept – international environment which is a kind of a softer conceptualisation of the international education market.

5.3.5. International environment

Rather than the 'hard' economics of the market, international environment is more related to the experiences of the actors named in the discourse; it is also facilitated by the successful competition in the market as indicated in the VU Strategic Plan (2020): "To increase the international competitiveness of research we will (…), strengthen the competencies of researchers to successfully participate and lead in international project activities (…), create *an international research environment* by bringing together highly qualified researchers" (p. 4). In the corpus, international environment includes many aspects and is the closest approximation of a qualitative measure of internationalisation as universities conceive it. As opposed to the quantitative elements of the number or share of international students or staff, the number of courses provided to an international audience, mobility flows, etc., international environment describes a desirable state that the universities aim to achieve with internationalisation. It is construed by the successful inclusion of international students and staff (referred to occasionally as an international community), mobility (referred to as an international experience) and a general attitude of increased cultural awareness, especially among the local staff and students.

The use of 'international environment' in its linguistic form increases throughout the period and it is much more prominent in the later sources which shows that the concept becomes more firmly embedded in the discursive architecture of internationalisation. That does not mean, however, that the concept only emerges at a later stage. Different linguistic means are chosen to allude to it. For instance, the 2004 UT Internationalisation Strategy and the Estonian Agreement on Good Practices of Internationalisation (2007) refer to the development of "a supportive environment for internationalisation" (p. 3) and "a study and work environment that facilitates internationalisation" (p. 1) respectively. We can already observe the conceptual development from an environment that fosters internationalisation into an environment that effectively proves or demonstrates internationalisation in the documents prepared in the early 2010s. A section of the Internationalisation goals and strategic directions (UT, 2014) is titled "International work environment" and refers to the university creating "a motivating and attractive, internationally and culturally diverse learning and working environment" as well as contributing to the "transformation of Tartu into an open-minded city, an international learning, working and living environment" (p. 2). The qualifiers such as 'living' also show that the concept is understood to be broader than the activities contained solely within the university.

In the 2015 Report on international studies (VU), the international environment is still conceptualised as a pre-condition to successful internationalisation. For instance, the Report states that

> the priority at the moment, however, should not be to increase the number of study programmes or the number of students (although this is also very important), but to improve the study environment and to

> create an international learning environment, as well as to foster cultural awareness among the university community (p. 16)

There is, however, a loosening of the higher education-related qualifiers since ‘international learning environment’ and ‘international environment’ are used interchangeably in the document. The necessity for linguistic qualifications, though, does not abate throughout the entire corpus. There are multiple variations of international environments qualified with words such as work, learning or research.

The merging of the semantic elements *condition for internationalisation* and *demonstrates internationalisation* is most prominent in the most recent documents. VU Strategic Plan (2020) includes the following statement: “the internationality of studies at the University will be developed by increasing the internationality of the study environment” (p. 6). This already demonstrates that the connection between international environment and internationalisation (internationality) becomes closer as the international environment not just fosters internationalisation but develops it. The conceptualisation that an international environment proves the international character of the institution is closely related to the international market concept. Consider this statement from the UT Strategic Plan (2020): “The university provides students with a developing international learning environment that opens world opportunities and the possibility to acquire additional skills and knowledge by studying abroad everywhere in the world” (p. 4). This implies that an international learning environment equips students with the necessary competences to successfully participate in the international education market.

The instrumental aspect of the concept of international environment is also underscored by its connection to the labour market. International environment is perceived as a necessary aspect of higher education because it is considered a stepping stone to the (international) labour market. UT Strategic Plan (2020) relates the international learning environment to linguistic proficiency which is considered an asset in the labour market: “to increase the competitiveness of students on the labour market, proficiency of other languages is also required and this is fostered by the international learning environment” (p. 6). The Report on the Internationalisation of Studies (VU, 2015) is even more straightforward:

> in the current context, it is essential to ensure that all students acquire the competences that will enable them to adapt flexibly in an international environment, to communicate effectively with people from different cultures, will provide opportunities to successfully integrate into universities abroad (…) It is therefore important to

create an intercultural learning environment at the university and to bring internationality into the study process (p. 3).

Here, the development of international learning environment is conceptualised as a parallel process to the internationalisation of curriculum since the two processes should jointly ensure that the students acquire the competences that will allow them to work or study in an international environment. Internationalisation of curriculum, however, is rarely referred to in the corpus and there are no significant discussions as to what it entails.

There are two main building blocks when the actual development of the international environment is discussed. Aside from international staff and students which allow for the creation of this international environment, in essence, simply by being present, two concepts emerged: international experience and cultural awareness (openness). International experience is related to the students and staff in the sense that it includes the traditional bulwark of internationalisation – mobility – but it also entails the encounters with the internationality embodied by international students or international academic staff. This internationality can be experienced abroad via mobility or at home via the presence of international students and staff, i.e., the international environment. The mobility aspect, quantified as the extent of academic exchange, is qualified as 'international experience'. The use of this phrase usually entails an experience abroad, in a foreign university, and these words are even used in the earlier documents before the use of 'international' becomes widespread. For instance, the UT Internationalisation Strategy (2014) includes a provision "to establish a requirement for academic experience abroad in filling academic positions" (p. 3). One of the starting points of the Language and internationalisation principles (UT, 2020) includes that "The university expects its staff to actively gain international experiences" (p. 1) and the VU Strategic Plan (2020) describes "opportunities for all students to gain international study experience" as the "indicator of internationality of studies" (p. 6). These phrasings also indicate that even though discursively international experience can include what is considered internationalisation at home, it is still primarily conceptualised in terms of activities that take place abroad.

The second notion included in the concept of international environment is a core feature of this environment, particularly in the dimension of values. International environment is conceptualised as an environment where a high degree of cultural awareness is exhibited by the people in it, and an 'openness' in their attitudes is observed. As with certain elements of the international education market, these aspects of the international environment were more prominent in the internal discourse available for Vilnius University. The

Report on International Studies (2015) indicates that “it is first of all necessary to resolve student counselling/integration and other problems at the university, as well as to raise the awareness of the university community and to eradicate the stereotypes prevailing among both students and staff” (p. 10–11). Participants of the focus groups also indicated openness, particularly of the academic staff, as a trait of an international university:

> For me it [an international university – M. O.] is an open university. That is, it receives, it gives, there's an exchange. We, ourselves, well, we change. (…) For me, this openness is internationality and it's not so much of the students, but of the lecturers themselves. (Focus groups, 2018)

Even though the notion of openness is formulated less directly in the strategic documents, it is still considered an important aspect of the university's success. The VU Strategic Plan (2018) entails a project in the strategic direction *Improve working conditions* “Create and implement a strategy of openness to equality and diversity (of employees' gender, culture, origin, social status, religion, age, etc.)” (p. 16). The vision of the University of Tartu quoted in the Strategic Plan (2020) also describes the university community as open: “We stick together and are an inspiring and open academic community” (p. 3).

‘International environment’ is possibly the most porous concept in the semantic field of internationalisation which at least partially explains why it is so often invoked. Since it carries a large amount of various possible meanings, it can be used quite easily in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. This frequent use also underscores the porousness of the concept of internationalisation itself.

5.3.6. The national

A particular concept emerged in the tensions between internationalisation and preservation of the national character of the universities as well as the issues of language related to these tensions. This was also the area where a certain degree of divergence was observed between the two universities. In the University of Tartu, this concept was significantly more pronounced with various argumentative frames used to describe and discuss the concept. In the official documents of Vilnius University, it was mentioned very rarely compared to UT. The focus groups, however, confirmed that this tension was nonetheless present in the unofficial university discourse.

The interplay between national development and internationalisation can already be observed in the earliest documents of University of Tartu, but there is substantial discursive development throughout the years. In the beginning, internationalisation is seen as a positive influence on the national development of the country. The 2004 UT Internationalisation Strategy claims that "developing the international dimension is important from the perspective of strengthening the University of Tartu as a national university" (p. 1) and the Agreement on Good Practices of Internationalisation (2007) notes the "significance of internationalisation for the sustainable development of Estonia" (p. 1). In later documents, the discourse shifts to explanations of how internationalisation activities are beneficial to the development of the national economy. The UT Internationalisation Goals and Strategic Directions (2014) notes that the university "creates new international curricula and continuing education programmes based on strong research fields, thereby contributing to the development of the Estonian economy" (p. 1), directly linking international curricula and national economy.

This *topos* is effectively non-existent in the Lithuanian section of the corpus. While the strategic documents refer to the university mission of social development, internationalisation is not conceptualised as a way to achieve that. For instance, the VU Strategic Plan (2020) describes the university's engagement in Lithuanian studies like this:

> By contributing to overcoming the current challenges, we will create an interdisciplinary research and study environment focused on the implementation of the sustainable development goals – health and well-being, high quality education and climate change prevention. In parallel, we will further the research of Lithuanian studies as a scientific knowledge of the totality of Lithuania (p.5)

In contrast, the UT Strategic Plan (2020) includes the following statement in the university's mission: "We ensure the continuity of Estonian intellectuals as well as the Estonian language and culture and as a strong research university, develop education, research, technology and other creative activities through interdisciplinary cooperation throughout the world" (p. 3). While both excerpts mention interdisciplinarity and engagement with the local context, UT takes on an additional – international – dimension with the phrase "cooperation throughout the world". Moreover, UT explicitly commits to the "continuity of Estonian intellectuals as well as the Estonian language and culture", while Vilnius University is focused on "Lithuanian studies", that is studies *about* the Lithuanian language and culture rather than the language and culture itself.

The most explicit nods to the possible conflict between internationalisation and national development or even the national identity are observed in the most recent documents of UT. The introduction to the UT Strategic Plan (2020) includes such statements:

> An Estonian-language university is of great value to Estonia and the entire world. The university has the obligation and mission to preserve and develop the Estonian language, education, culture and heritage, and this role is eternal and prevails any fixed-term strategic plans (…) The different roles of the university in achieving its mission must not be contrasted. The university will be the universitas only if it covers a broad spectrum of specialisations and acts as a national university, an international university as well as a developer of the economy and society (p. 5)

Here, the perceived conflict between internationalisation and preservation of national culture and identity is resolved in two ways. First, the value of an Estonian-language university is affirmed and the university's mission to preserve it is demonstrated to take priority over any other endeavour that would appear in a fixed-term plan. It can be assumed that internationalisation could be one of such endeavours. The next statement contradicts the discourse of either national or international with the claim that in order for university to fulfil its mission it has to be *both* national and international.

The need for preservation of the national identity and language also emerges in the focus groups. There also lies a possible explanation for this perceived conflict between national and international. As mentioned above, the discourse of opposition was not as prominent in Vilnius University. However, the assumption that international education is provided in English led to the conceptualisation of internationalisation as antithetical to the preservation and flourishing of national language. In this argumentative line, a participant who had been working at the university for a long time compared internationalisation to the Russification efforts that the university had to resist during the Soviet rule:

> I think that the university, because, I'd like to stress it again, it is a university in a nation state, it has to learn to live in such a globalised world, we need to look for a model and maintain both sides. I will repeat, the Soviet experience, when we also had to exist in such an adversary environment, by the way, is worth looking into (…) we had to defend it [the university] and now, I mean, we don't need to defend, but we need to exist while retaining [our] identity. (Focus groups, 2018).

While the solution to maintain both sides echoes that of the University of Tartu, in this case, internationalisation is conceptualised not as an element of the university's mission but as a threat. In this *topos*, internationalisation creates adversary conditions and the university has to maintain a balance between the pressures of internationalisation and the need to preserve the national identity. An opposite position was expressed in another focus group. One of the participants argued against the focus on the national development over internationalisation precisely because the two should not be in opposition:

> The issue for us is more about the breadth of the content we teach, when we think if this is relevant to Lithuania, and in that narrow clog-dance imagery of what Lithuania is. For some reason, Lithuania is then removed from Europe, as if what is relevant to Europe is an alternative, because they ask "but what is good for Lithuania?". So, is Lithuania not Europe? I see this in Humanities. And this I see as the biggest challenge, truly, to break this discourse that this is some kind of alternative, either-or kind of thing. Lithuanian content, international content. As if science could only be either national or international. (Focus groups, 2018)

Both of these opinions were somewhat extreme in the sense that they were only expressed by several people. They did not, however, receive opposition from other members of the groups. The issue of the preservation of national identity as such was not taken up for a deep discussion in Vilnius University. However, the national element was also observed in the discourse on the concept of language.

5.3.7. Language

A particular area of the contention mentioned above is the language of instruction in international education. In essence, the main question around which the conceptualisation of language in the semantic field of internationalisation revolves is whether international education can be provided in a national language. The answer to this question allows to either conceptualise internationalisation as a threat to national languages and, presumably, identities, or not. The concept of language in this case, thus, includes both the national language and the language of internationalisation.

In terms of the discourse on the role of the national language, there is again a divergence among the two universities. As in the previous concept, University of Tartu shows a far more elaborate discourse on the issue. The provisions for the university to ensure that international students and staff have the opportunity and are encouraged to study Estonian language upon arrival to the university are already found in the earliest documents from 2004 and 2007. Two assumptions can be drawn from this. First, internationalisation might have been viewed as a possible threat to the preservation of Estonian national language and identity since these provisions suggest a need to balance it out. Second, the Estonian language was deemed important and necessary enough for the international members of the university community and the university itself, since the solution to mitigate this possible negative influence was not to avoid or diminish the internationalisation activities but to expand the teaching of the national language.

The growing importance of the national language and culture education is also illustrated in the more recent documents. UT Internationalisation goals and strategic directions (2014) contain provisions that the university "introduces Estonian language and culture to its international staff members, facilitating their adjustment to the Estonian society; develops and provides international continuing education programmes on Estonian language and culture" (p. 3). Furthermore, the UT Strategic Plan (2020) indicates that the university considers instruction in Estonian important and "in addition to high-level research publications, we value the preparation of Estonian-language textbooks for higher education institutions, taking this into account upon selecting employees for academic positions and in their professional review" (p. 6).

Vilnius University scarcely refers to this matter in the documents and the language related issues in the focus groups revolve around the language of instruction. While some argued that international studies can also be conducted in Lithuanian, there was a prevailing attitude that instruction in a foreign language is one of the primary features of internationalisation. In response to the experience of some participants that Lithuanian students were unwilling to participate in English-taught courses and following the either-or argumentative frame, some considered the preservation of national language and identity an excuse:

> there are a lot of people [students] who can read English, but it's not a hundred percent and now we are focusing on the rest (…) and then we say that it's okay and we don't need to do that, saying that we are fostering some kind of national mentality or identity (…). For some reason, we're focusing on the average: moderately smart, moderately conscious national student who believes his rights to learn in Lithuanian to be more important and says that he's going to be a Lithuanian citizen. No, he will be a citizen of the world and if we think that he will be a Lithuanian citizen, we plainly condemn him to be solely a citizen of Lithuania. (Focus groups, 2018)

The conceptualisation of the language of internationalisation has changed over the years. In the initial documents, the phrase 'foreign language' is used, for example, “establish opportunities for study in foreign languages in University of Tartu master’s degree programmes; to prioritise the establishment of joint degrees with universities abroad, in developing foreign language curricula” (UT Internationalisation Strategy, 2004, p. 2). The Plan for Strengthening International Activities (2009) discusses the number of study programmes and the number of courses in “foreign languages”. In the later stages, ‘foreign languages’ and ‘English’ are used together, however, English often takes precedence: “part-time or full-time students from abroad are integrated into common groups if the study programme or the subject (module) is delivered in English (or in another foreign language)” (VU Guidelines for Internationalisation, 2019, p. 5). The dominant position of English vis-à-vis other foreign languages is, increasingly more noticeable as the time goes on. The Strategic Plan of Vilnius University for 2018–2020 (2018) includes a project to “develop Master study programmes taught in *English*” (p. 9) under the strategic direction “Develop *international* Master’s and Doctoral studies”. The University of Tartu Language and Internationalisation Principles (2020), aside from Estonian, also mostly refers to English.

The most recent strategic plans of both universities, however, do not use either of the options – foreign or English language – and choose the word ‘international’ in all of its references to international curriculum, students or staff. One possible explanation is that internationalisation by this point becomes English-coded and the predominance of English is included in the notion of international. It can also be read as a certain circular re-contextualisation of ‘foreign’ in the sense that the use of both ‘foreign’ and ‘international’ allows to not name the language. This omission can, thus, prevent the conceptualisation of internationalisation as a threat to the national language by diluting the threatening element of linguistic dominance since ‘international’ does not refer to any specific language.

The conflation of ‘English’ and ‘international’ emerged as one of the subjects discussed in the focus groups. The majority of participants maintained that internationalisation is more than just a linguistic transformation of a study programme from a national language to English. The association, however, was considered a powerful one largely because the various measures of internationalisation that the academics are expected to meet do indeed measure activities of a foreign character: publications in English, study programmes in English or a number of students who study in English. A number of participants indicated this as an issue that works to the detriment of the development of a national scientific discourse:

> we have to realise that if we just focus exclusively on language, which is clearly visible in our science policy and in many other places, then we really lose a lot, (…) we suddenly decide that everything that is in the Lithuanian language is worthless, this is then the a priori decision, so I'm saying that balance has to be maintained. [Do you mean that language is just a tool? – Moderator] Yes, but you see, that's the thing, that our scientific policy has unfortunately turned that one tool into the only tool of evaluation. (Focus groups, 2018)

In light of this, the participants still maintained that language is an instrument, merely one of the tools to foster internationalisation: "Even though this study programme does not support internationalisation, because it is implemented in Lithuanian, according to that first static criterion, [whether it can be considered international – M. O.] it is still a question of content and of quality, the language is a very instrumental matter" (Focus groups, 2018). While the English language was considered an important aspect, it was conceptualised rather as one of possible indicators of internationalisation and not a necessary condition for it. However, as we can see in the quote above, a significantly more important aspect was that of quality.

5.3.8. Quality

As in the previous period, quality appears as one of the focal concepts in the semantic field of internationalisation in the university discourse of the early 21st century. Its conceptualisation, however, is slightly different than in the 1990s. It is possible that partially due to a different genre of texts, the negative space aspect of its conceptualisation is not observed here. Naturally, it is highly unlikely that universities would discuss a lack of quality in their publicly available strategic documents. Quality, though, is still aspirational and even more ubiquitous (mentioned in every text in the corpus); yet, it is not more defined. In lieu of a more precise conceptualisation of quality, it becomes synonymous with internationalisation. The relationship between quality and internationalisation is circular since quality implies internationalisation and internationalisation leads to quality.

Conceptually, quality is particularly related to the concepts of competition and international education market as well as the concepts of cooperation and international standards. Due to competition being conceptualised as international, the more international one is, the more successful on the international market it should be. Internationalisation then becomes an indicator of good quality (*ergo*, international studies are better). The other side of this coin is that studies of good quality are more competitive internationally, therefore, if the quality of studies is good enough, they could be considered international. The two notions – internationalisation and quality – are even described as synonymous in the Report on International Studies (2015) developed at VU: "As globalisation has intensified, *internationality of studies has become synonymous with quality*" (p. 3). Cooperation is largely coded as international and conceptualised as something that can improve the quality of the various endeavours. It is also overlayed with the concept of competition in the sense that these improvements are perceived to improve the odds of competition: "to be *successful in international competition*, we offer attractive working and learning opportunities, also by *cooperating with partner institutions*, and thereby *increase the effectiveness* of teaching and research at the university" (UT Strategic Plan, 2020, p. 7).

Internationalisation is also conceptualised as a way to raise the academic standards (another measure of quality) of the university in UT Internationalisation Strategy (2004) where the mission of the strategy is "to *raise the academic standard* of the university in both research and education by developing *international activity* in all fields and strengthening the university's *internationally competitive* profile" (p. 1). This statement alludes that the university shall improve thanks to the development of international activities and international competition. It follows the logic of market-enforced quality improvement where it is believed that if organisations are forced to compete for clients, they will improve the quality of the product. In this regard, internationalisation is conceptualised as a necessary, inevitable element of higher education which can ensure the survival of a higher education institution: "for us this is [a matter of] survival. (…) If we don't become an international university, we will become a regional education centre of some kind, which has no prestige, no status, no financial autonomy, just a merchant of studies" (Focus groups, 2018).

There was opposition (albeit, limited) to this *topos* in the focus groups as well. Some participants argued that science and research are, by nature, international, therefore, internationalisation is not a necessary condition for quality or, rather, that it happens without active efforts: "There can be high quality studies with local resources, because science is international and it is the same everywhere, and you just exchange competences, exchange knowledge with the entire world and that is what creates this internationalisation" (Focus groups, 2018). A particular argument against the conflation of internationalisation and quality also emerges in the focus groups where some participants see this conflation as a particularly threatening narrative:

> That we just put the quality mark on internationalisation without critically questioning what it is, I think this is really not suitable (…) We are at a very critical point now, when it is being said *a priori* that our studies are of poor quality and we have created this on our own. There is this wave that returns back to the shore, our constant crucifixion, that everything that is done in Lithuania regarding internationalisation and studies, is bad, and finally it ends up pulling us over (Focus groups, 2018).

This narrative comes in part as a response to the envisioned conceptualisation of internationalisation as an evaluative measure similar to how quality has been used by the politicians to enforce change and control upon the higher education institutions:

> One aspect [of internationalisation is that] this is a game invented by our bureaucrats to somehow, excuse me, nag these higher education institutions, well, to do internationalisation here. Then some experts will come and say, yes, you are doing it, but this is bad, this is not enough, do more, or else we will close you down (Focus groups, 2018).

Quality is also conceptually linked to cooperation and international standards. Cooperation is conceptualised almost exclusively as international and perceived as a way to reach the international standards which, subsequently, show a growth in quality. For instance, "We strive for a national leadership in all academic fields and are able to be among the top 400 universities in the world, adhering to the *highest standards* as understood in the international community of every scientific field" (VU Strategic Plan 2021–2025 (2020), p. 2). 'International' in international standards, however, is still conceptualised via the lens of (Western) Europe with only passing mentions of other higher education areas: "The university's strategic partners are the networks of recognised research universities *mostly from Europe* and high-level research universities in Asia and North-America, the cooperation with which is based on top-level competence and mutual research contacts" (UT Language and internationalisation principles, 2020, p. 1). Multiple references are made to European Higher Education Area, the best Western European universities, the best practices of Western universities, and leading universities in Europe. An explicit reference is made in the UT Strategic Plan (2020): "The university is consistently moving closer to the best universities of Europe and the world and has set itself a direct aim to reach the level of strong Nordic universities" (p. 5). This conceptualisation points to the development of aspirations in a more precise and delineated fashion. The universities not so much strive to achieve a vaguely described level of 'the

West' but rather focus on particular measures that would allow them to achieve the quality that is perceived to be present in the 'Western' universities.

Overall, the concept of internationalisation in the university discourse of Estonia and Lithuania from 2000 to 2020 is comprised of several interrelated groups of concepts. The first group consists of the concepts of competition, reputation and rankings which are also closely related to the concept of the international education market; the latter is conceptualised as a place where said competition is taking place. The second group includes the concept of international environment which is understood both as a condition and proof of successful internationalisation and the tension between national and international dimensions that is represented via the concept of the national. The concept of language serves as a link between this group and the third group which includes quality and the related concepts. Whereas national language is an element of the national, foreign language is related to quality in the sense that international education (provided in a foreign language, usually English) is conceptualised as that of higher quality. Consequently, internationalisation is effectively conceptualised as a tool for higher education institutions to improve their international standing, perform better on the international education market and achieve the international standards that are conceptualised as those of European or Western universities.

6. DISCUSSION

The primary topic of this study is internationalisation of higher education or, in the context of this thesis, simply internationalisation. The title, however, also implies other aspects which came to be no less important. The region where the conceptual development was observed, posed its own conceptual challenges and peculiarities. Even though the primary focus was on two universities in two countries, a significant portion of the study pertains to the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe. The study, therefore, to an extent, tracks two processes of conceptual development – that of Eastern Europe and that of internationalisation in Eastern Europe. In this section, I aim to expand on the results of the study and connect the different sections; to relate the findings of the study to previous research; to elaborate on the development of the concept of internationalisation in two countries of Eastern Europe from 1990 to 2020.

Europe but not Europe

The analysis of the conception of Eastern Europe in the international academic scholarship in the field of education from 1990 to 2000 primarily served as an entry point to the analysis of internationalisation in the region during the same period. However, it brought important insights into the expectations placed upon Eastern European education systems at the time, which went far beyond education itself. These expectations were further reflected in the semantic field of internationalisation in 1990–2000. This confirms that the two processes not only happened simultaneously in terms of chronological time but that the conceptual development of one had bearing on the conceptual development of the other. That is, the development of the concept Eastern Europe in the 1990s influenced the development of the concept internationalisation. This influence, of course, diminished in strength in the second period. Nonetheless, the semantic field of internationalisation in 2000–2020 also reflects the discourses prevalent in Eastern European higher education of the 1990s.

The analysis of the development of Eastern Europe in the education scholarship of the 1990s confirmed that Central and Eastern Europe is one of the most salient regional concepts (Mishkova & Trencsényi, 2017). A wide variety of names and descriptions conferred upon the region points to a high level of conceptual ambiguity. Any country from East Germany to Kazakhstan could be considered Eastern Europe by education scholars of the time. It is also evident that ‘Eastern’ is not merely a geographical description but is clearly imbued with cultural values and expectations. In the discourse developed by education researchers in the 1990s, we can observe the recontextualisation or, in this case, maybe a retelling of the mythology of Western and Eastern Europe. Wolff's (1996) description of Eastern Europe as having been constructed during the Enlightenment as "a geographical domain and a philosophical idea at once" (pp. 358–359) measured on the scale of civilization, is recontextualised in the 1990s. The demi-orientalization wherein Western Europe is conceptualised as the normative Europe and Eastern Europe as a demi-Other is alive and well in the 1990s. This contradicts both the presumed 'naturalness' of a spatial concept and the oft-touted presumption that research is (or can be) devoid of any personal or cultural mores. It is important to stress here that the articles analysed in this section rarely explicitly discussed or reflected the concept of Eastern Europe and its positioning vis-á-vis Western Europe or, as it was overwhelmingly referred to in the corpus, Europe.

An important note should be made about the development of Central and Eastern Europe as the dominant linguistic expression of the concept after 1995. On one hand, it points to an even more increased porousness of the concept as 'Central and Eastern' encompasses almost everything that is not Western. Arguably, a very rational substitution for 'Central and Eastern Europe' could be 'non-Western Europe', however, this is not even considered in actual discourse. There are several reasons why 'Central and Eastern Europe' prevailed against both its actual competitor 'Eastern Europe' and the one I just made up, 'non-Western Europe'. These reasons have very little, if anything, to do with geography. First, the normative conceptualisation of Western Europe as Europe, makes 'Western Europe' conceptually unnecessary since the concept of Europe already implies its 'Westerness'. Ergo, the linguistic expression 'Western Europe' is rarely ever used (in education scholarship, it is virtually unmentioned after 2000) and is almost entirely subsumed in Europe. Therefore, the logical but made-up term 'non-Western Europe' is not viable due to the discursive unavailability of 'Western Europe'.

It is not straightforward but I maintain that the reason Central and Eastern Europe has become the dominant term after 1995 is precisely due to the non-geographical implications of Eastern Europe. Given the presumed 'otherness' of the region, largely coded in the word 'Eastern', Central performs a mitigating function in the concept and both distances it from the East, on one side, and brings it closer to the West, on the other. As we have observed, this movement westward was one of the main aspirations of the countries covered by the concept during the 1990s. These aspirations were conditioned by the often explicit wish to not be 'East' as, in the region, 'East' was also associated with the oppressive rule by the Soviet Union, dominated by Russia. The sources of the negative coding of the East may have been different for those inside and outside the region, but the encoded normative value remained the same, thus, implying a need to distance the region from the East[9]. This distancing was created by the popularisation of ‘Central and Eastern Europe’ instead of ‘Eastern Europe’.

Conceptually, however, the distinction is not sharp. In this particular context, Central and Eastern Europe is more a linguistic expression of the concept Eastern Europe than a distinct concept in its own right (which it, arguably, is in different contexts). Therefore, in this section I will refer to Eastern Europe (while in the results section references were made to both with respect to the use in the original texts in the corpus) with the understanding that Eastern Europe is the primary concept of the conceptual cluster of Central and Eastern Europe. Even though the period of the 1990s is extremely short, it is a very rich period in terms of sociocultural and political influences that had the capacity to shape the discourse on Eastern Europe.

Several layers of semantic influences on the concept of Eastern Europe can be distinguished. The development of the concept in the 1990s takes place in a conceptual space heavily influenced by concepts and discourses of modernity and modernisation, as exemplified by the expectation that Eastern Europe shall “progress into the modern Europe” (Szebenyi, 1992, p. 30). In other words, modernise enough to lose its ‘Eastness’. The prevalence of progress in the semantic field and the composition of the field itself point to the modern (historically speaking) temporalization of concepts (Koselleck, 2011). As progress is a temporal concept which carries a normative value and belongs to the ideal future as opposed to a bygone past (Steinmetz and Freeden, 2017), this normative value is also placed on the ‘modern Europe’.

The concepts related to the communist past are, often explicitly, temporally coded as elements of a bygone past via the use of ‘former’ and ‘post’. These associations build on the substrate of demi-Orientalization and the resulting backwardness trope discussed by Wolff (1996) with regards to the conceptualisation of Eastern Europe during the Enlightenment. This demi-Orientalization resulted in Eastern Europe being granted the subordinate position relative to the ‘civilized’ West on the binary between civilization and barbarism. Even though Eastern Europe was not the full Other as was the Orient, it was nonetheless placed in an ambiguous space associated with

[9] It is telling that while formely occupied states to the West of Russia conceptualised the process of education reforms intended to remove the remnants of soviet education as de-Sovietization (Oleksiyenko, 2023), those to the East of Russia (for instance, Kazakhstan) referred to the same process as de-Europeanization (Kissane, 2005).

backwardness and need for development (Wolff, 1996). We can clearly see those same tropes reflected and refracted in the 1990s with the discourse on sub-par (compared to the West) quality of education in Eastern Europe. It is in line with Zarycki's (2014) argument that after the Soviet Union lost its symbolic capital, the communist past of the region could be used as an explanation for its underdevelopment. This also ties in with the logic of some of the proponents of the modernization theory who maintained that Eastern European societies would have followed the modernisation pattern of the Western societies (and economies) had this path not been blocked by the Soviet ideology (Müller, 1992).

Overall, the semantic elements of the present time – knowledge transfer, and assistance connote that the meanings imbued in Eastern Europe do not reflect a settled concept but rather point to the possible change the concept (and the region it refers to) is to undergo. Transition and progress communicate the normative value of this change and temporally direct the conceptual change to the future as do the notions of lagging behind and catching up. Eastern Europe is, in essence, conceptualised via the opposition between its space of experience and its horizon of expectation. From the outside, the region under the concept is expected to shed its 'Eastern' past and progress into the normative 'Europe'. From the inside, as argued by Holmes and Krastev (2018), the reformers of the post-communist countries aspired to become normal, and the norm was the West. The spectrum of civilization of the 19th century is replaced with the spectrum of modernization; yet, Eastern Europe is again found to be lesser than the Europe it is measured against.

Internationalisation in Eastern Europe: the origin story

The international discourse on higher education of Eastern Europe of the 1990s shows that while international activities may well have existed throughout the history of universities, internationalisation, as it came to be conceptualised, was a rather unfamiliar concept in the region. In part, that was because internationalisation was still developing in the West; more importantly, the 1990s were not a time for deep reflections and considerations, as needed as they may have been. All things considered, it was a time of rapid, often abrupt and volatile developments, both economically and socially. Extending Holmén's (2020) argument that the traveling of concepts from one field to another is most intense after social or political revolutions, we could argue that the 1990s in Eastern Europe was a particularly permeable time in terms of the development and adoption of new concepts. The semantic field also shows that there is a high level of conceptuality in the discourse, with the discussions on concepts such as autonomy, democracy, and transition, all of which carry complex semantic loads of their own. Internationalisation is overwhelmingly conceptualised via international cooperation and academic exchange with higher education systems of the countries of the global West, primarily those in Western Europe. The dynamic of this cooperation and exchange, however, is imbalanced with Eastern European higher education construed as a beneficiary and recipient of both monetary and epistemic assistance.

The findings of this study show that the discourses of aspiration towards ‘greater Europe’ prevalent throughout the 1990s perceived education and, in particular, higher education as one of the primary areas for ‘modernization’. Higher education was conceptually employed to create the necessary conditions and ensure the development of democracy. As democracy and market economy overlapped in the discourse on socio-economic transition of the countries and the transformation of higher education systems, the role of market economy became crucial to the conceptualisation of Eastern European higher education of the 1990s. The market-based understanding of higher education, already developing in the West, buoyed by the market-induced modernization theory in Eastern Europe, found a particularly fertile ground in Eastern European higher education systems. This approach provided a West-approved model for reducing the involvement of the state in higher education – an approach that was strictly rejected after decades of centralised Soviet rule.

Higher education institutions were not only catalysts but also objects of change themselves. The radical removal of everything related to the Soviet rule led to a particularly high degree of autonomy of HEIs and the expansion of the higher education sector (Saar & Roosalu, 2018). In the semantic field, this is demonstrated by the conceptual pair of democracy and autonomy. In essence, autonomy of HEIs was perceived as the expression of democracy that the countries aspired to. Conceptually, autonomy is democracy recontextualised in higher education. It is important to note that the conceptual load of democracy is rarely ever discussed in the corpus. While autonomy is conceptualised as something that is the opposite of the imposition of the state rule on higher education institutions, democracy is conceptualised as something that is opposite to the communist ideology and state-control of the Soviet era. It stands to reason that the impact the Soviet rule had on Eastern European education is only rivaled by the impact carried by its subsequent rejection. This also supports Oleksiyenko‘s (2023) observation that de-Sovietization/de-Russification is still one the main themes which shape the geopolitical agenda in the internationalisation of post-Soviet higher education to this day.

Nonetheless, the vagueness mentioned above is part of a trend followed by many concepts in the semantic field of internationalisation of the 1990s. In some cases, for example, market economy, the concept is even explicitly discussed in the corpus as lacking any kind of consensus on its "meaning and limits" (Cerych, 1995, p. 430), in other words, its conceptual load. The proliferation of various movement concepts such as democratisation, transformation or decentralisation also reflects a discourse where static concepts are transformed into ongoing processes or future tasks (Steinmetz & Freeden, 2017). An exeptionally vague conceptualisation is that of quality which is habitually described in the negative, that is, by referring to a particular lack or deficit. Upon its emergence in the higher education discourse, quality is an aspirational and future-oriented concept which primarily conveys a shortage of quality.

As part of a more general trend of higher education marketization and the rise of economic rationales for internationalisation (de Wit & Merkx, 2021), the conceptual development of quality is particularly important for the development of internationalisation. In the 1990s, the need for new skills and competences, particularly in business and management studies, led to an influx of students but the harsh economic conditions did not allow for sufficient higher education funding. In absence of any additional funding, and heavily influenced by the neoliberal approach of the modernization theory, the competition of HEIs was perceived to lead to improvements in quality. Even though the concept was scarcely described, it became very prominent in the 1990s and retained its focal role throughout the entire research period. Tomusk (2000) argued that in many Eastern European countries, the response to the expansion of the system was to introduce quality assurance measures and the high attention paid to quality assurance is one of the most common characteristics of post-state socialist countries (Tomusk, 2000). Accordingly, both in Lithuania and Estonia, these quality assurance measures (usually in the form of evaluations and accreditations) are considered policy instruments used to limit the expansion of the system and ensure satisfactory levels of quality (Leišytė et al., 2018; Saar & Roosalu, 2018).

These were the conditions for the emerging discourse on quality of higher education. As the analysis shows, there were two main forces in the conceptualisation of quality. On one hand, it was closely related to the needs of 'the market', both the labour market and the market economy. High quality higher education was expected to be economically beneficial to its graduates, that is, to satisfy the needs of the labour market and the individual, and to the higher education institutions, that is, ensure that they have enough funding to conduct their activities. Thus, quality became associated with efficiency, effectiveness and, given the over-saturated education market, competition. The second conceptualising force for quality was the adherence to international standards which serves as a sub-concept of quality. It ties in with Tomusk's (2000) assertion that the quality discourse of the time is used to legitimise certain policies and is built on the premise that there is a blueprint for quality and it is available in the leading universities of Western countries.

This also points to the interplay between external and internal factors in the conceptualisation of internationalisation. The development of the concept can only be partially explained by internal contexts described above. The external factors were at least of equal, if not greater, importance. The focus on cooperation activities and the conceptualisation of internationalisation as internationalisation abroad, primarily, through mobility and exchange, is in line with the global understanding of internationalisation at the time. In the last decades of the 20th century, internationalisation was still largely based on foreign policy arguments and had only recently shifted from the movement of individual students to activities developed by nation-states. However, in the 1990s, economic rationales were already taking over in the development of internationalisation in the West (de Wit & Merkx, 2021).

This had very practical implications for the often under-funded Eastern European higher education sector. Throughout the 1990s, the European Community (later – the European Union led by the European Commission), one of the primary sources of funding for Eastern European countries, was developing formal education policies in response to the more widespread international competition by fostering greater internal cooperation between the member states. The countries of Eastern Europe were particularly targeted in terms of the development of content and methods of education (Želvys, 1997). Also, the role of primarily economic supranational organisations (the OECD and the World Bank) was particularly influential as they were both a source of funding and guidance in the 1990s (Dobbins & Kwiek, 2017). These factors all coalesced into an overwhelmingly economic conceptualisation of internationalisation, primarily understood as international cooperation.

In case of internationalisation in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, timing was almost everything. International cooperation which stood for internationalisation was conceptualised as a way to achieve the aforementioned international standards, ergo, quality. The unequal nature of the cooperation with the epistemic power and resources located on the Western side fostered an instrumental and quite narrow conception of internationalisation. Extremely influenced by the factors outside the region and the field of education, internationalisation was conceived of as a way to acquire the necessary knowledge on what higher education should be like to achieve international (Western) standards. This, it was believed, in turn, should help the higher education systems and societies of Eastern Europe to be accepted into the aspirational 'Europe'.

Becoming international, becoming 'Europe'

By 2020, internationalisation has undoubtedly become a prominent concept in the university discourse of two Eastern European countries, Lithuania and Estonia. The contrasting semantic fields (Figure 9, below) of the two periods show a significant conceptual development of internationalisation throughout the entire period from 1990 to 2020, different data sources notwithstanding. Such development, however, was to be expected given the historical circumstances and the radical changes and reforms in the societies and education systems of these countries.

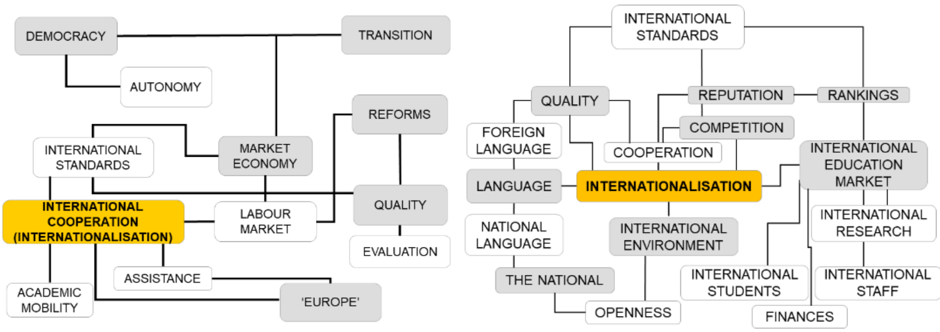

Figure 7. *Semantic fields of internationalisation in academic scholarship on Central and Eastern European education in 1990–2000 (left) and in University documents in Lithuania and Estonia in 2000–2020 (right)*

The conceptual scope of internationalisation is significantly expanded in the second period and the sematic field reflects that. In the first period, internationalisation is primarily conceptualised as international cooperation and is just one of a number of concepts prevalent in higher education. In the second, it is one of the focal concepts in the higher education discourse and the available meanings for internationalisation are significantly more varied. The increasing ambiguousness of the concept in the later period is underscored by the emergence of concepts such as international environment and international education market which are semantically wide and vague themselves. Internationalisation is also firmly embedded in the wider discursive architecture of the higher education of the period as demonstrated by the connections with concepts such as quality, competition or rankings. All of these are 'bigger' than internationalisation, yet, they are conceptually closely related to it.

Several points are of note with regards to this conceptual and semantic expansion. The fact of expansion itself, on one hand, is related to the development of internationalisation practices in the West. Notions of ‘internationalisation at home’ or ‘comprehensive internationalisation’ came into the conversation only in the early 2000s and it took even longer to at least somewhat shake the belief that internationalisation was something that happened abroad (Knight, 2012). Also, in the second period, internationalisation is significantly much more widespread in the two universities and the region in general. The discourse can now be more based on the internationalisation that is actually hapenning in the universities, rather than the internationalisation that they wish would be happenning as would have been the case in the 1990s. Understandably, a corpus consisting of university-created texts on internationalisation rather than research articles, provides more depth and a more detailed conceptualisation.

A wide net of related concepts not only shows the importance of internationalisation in the university discourse; it also allows to see the various ways in which internationalisation is operationalised. Internationalisation is conceptualised as a process that should increase the university’s competitive standing in the rankings as well as the international education market; improve its reputation among international stakeholders, potential students and staff. The inclusion of international staff and students helps foster the international environment, which is both a condition and proof of successful internationalisation. Since ‘international’ carries a normative value of ‘better’, internationalisation is then also both a tool and proof of quality.

The conceptual relationship between quality and internationalisation is particularly salient and its roots can already be observed in the earlier period. As the ephemeral ‘quality’ was considered the ultimate goal of the higher education sector, it became closely associated with international cooperation. International activities, thus, were believed to ensure or, at the very least, foster the achievement of quality. This conceptual emptiness of quality and the instrumental approach allows for the dual conceptualisation of internationalisation as quality and quality as internationalisation, as observed in the later period. The conflation of the two concepts points to a common thread of evaluation. Both quality and internationalisation can be used as measures for evaluation of higher education institutions. Moreover, both of these concepts are operationalised for various policy goals in a mutually reinforcing way: internationalisation for the sake of quality and quality for the sake of internationalisation. The dominating discourse then posits that only international HEIs are providing education of high quality. Conversely, education of high quality is, therefore, international. Internationalisation, not unlike quality, is conceptualised as something that is natural to higher education (particularly, in research), ubiquitous and inevitable.

The sense of inevitability is particularly potent in the focus group data as the official HEI discourse does not question the imperative of internationalisation in any sense whatsoever. This discourse of inevitable internationalisation shows how deeply embedded internationalisation is in the conceptualisation of modern Eastern European higher education; it also hints at the aspirational quality of internationalisation. As with quality in the 1990s, international is something that the universities 'shall be'. Internationalisation is not a state that can be achieved at some point, but a process. This is, first and foremost, grammatically correct. International + -isation refers to the process of becoming international, just as modern + -isation refers to the process of becoming modern. These are compound nouns used to refer to a process.

This grammatical form also allows to consider internationalisation a modern (in the historical sense) future-oriented concept from a conceptual point of view. Koselleck argued that in the Modernity, concepts shift from describing a state of being, for instance, democracy, into describing a process of achieving such state, that is, democratisation, and thus, move from describing present into describing future. Therefore, modern concepts no longer just indicate facts but also become factors of change with a capacity to influence consciousness and behaviour (Koselleck, 2002). Koselleck further argued that this process of conceptual temporalization, wherein the focus of the concept lies overwhelmingly in its horizon of expectation, leads to increasingly abstract concepts, which require additional markers to differentiate. While this is not particular to Eastern Europe, the proliferation of internationalisations (comprehensive, critical, intelligent) suggests that internationalisation can indeed be considered an example of a modern future-oriented concept.

A practical expression of this future-orientation is the presence of internationalisation in all the recent strategic plans of the two universities analysed. Indeed, previous researchers have also observed the emergence of internationalisation as one of the core strategic goals in the strategic plans of the leading Estonian universities (Aavik, 2019). While this may also be the case in Lithuania, the extent of strategic planning is significantly greater in Estonia. Indeed, it is precisely this systematic and sustainable strategic approach has been credited as the primary reason for Estonia's internationalisation success (Rose & Leišytė, 2016). Compared to the sporadic actions of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science with varying degrees of involvement from universities throughout the 30-year period, the development in Estonia is as astounding in its sustainability as it is in its achievements.

There are several possible reasons for these differences in the two countries which up to 2000 did not exhibit substantial divergence in how internationalisation was implemented in the higher education sector. Even after the initial expansion, Estonian higher education sector was smaller; most universities did not have as much lobbying power to affect the changes in the national policy as has been the case in the Lithuanian higher education sector (Leišytė et al., 2019). While the resistance of universities can explain the lack of sustained national efforts, I believe that the different approaches towards self-funded students can also help explain why the universities may or may not have had the inclination and capacity to disagree with the propositions 'from above'.

In Lithuania, the funding is determined by the number of students who apply to a particular study programme and their entrance grade (calculated based on the results of school-leaving exams). Local and EU students compete for state-funded placements on equal grounds, regardless of whether a study programme is conducted in Lithuanian or in English. Non EU-students can only be self-funded at the bachelor and masters level; the competition for state-funded PhD placements is open to all prospective students. In Estonia, in contrast, the determinant is the language of instruction. All higher education provided in Estonian is provided free of charge since 2013. Higher education in English is tuition-based with universities providing tuition waivers for the most qualified students. This serves as a rather big incentive for universities to both aim to increase the number of English-taught programmes and the number of international students (since they are more likely to study in English) to supplement the state-provided funding. The Lithuanian model lacks such incentives because tuition fees are paid by both local and international students. Nonetheless, the tuition fees for non-EU students are three times those of local students, so attracting them is economically beneficial.

Different experiences, however, do not necessitate a difference in conceptualisation. The university documents were analysed all together and without any specific goal to compare and contrast. Working with two cases, however, an inclination to compare is only human. Also, given that the decision to analyse the data together was made after the primary analysis, the secondary analysis was used to make sure that this was the right path. I am confident that the semantic field of internationalisation holds true for both universities. The slight differences only emerge in the extent to which a concept is prominent in the field. In some cases, this, quite probably, is due to different data sources as focus groups participants were more inclined to discuss sensitive issues or criticise something. That, understandably, was not the case in the Estonian documents which were developed for outside consumption. For instance, openness as a sub-concept of international environment was observed in both countries; however, in the Lithuanian case it was more elaborate as the focus group format allowed for a deeper discussion on what openness entailed, rather than a general statement of open and tolerant environment, which was the case in Estonia.

Another difference, and a more substantial one, was in the concept of language. The dichotomy between national language and foreign language is present in both universities, however, the Estonian discourse is significantly more robust on the issues that pertain to the tension between the national and the international. There are two strands here that should be dissected. One is the common thread among radical right political groups across Europe who tend to use increasing diversity in their societies as a tool to foment fear and hate for political gain. It is not surprising that increasing numbers of international students, especially non-white international students, would attract the attention of such groups, especially in a country as small as Estonia. These groups tend to employ bad faith arguments, posed as legitimate concerns, for instance, that the presence of international students is detrimental to the linguistic vitality of the national language. Since Estonian universities already teach Estonian to all international students, the solution presupposed by such argument is just not admitting any international students. Overall, these are not legitimate concerns, but they do build on a linguistic and national insecurity present in the countries who experienced Russification attempts not once, but twice in the past two centuries.

While the Soviet Russification was subtler and the national languages were not outright abolished, the Tsarist Russification in the late 19th century lacked any such subtlety. Lithuania's participation in the uprisings of 1830–1831 and 1863 was followed by waves of Russification. In 1832, Vilnius university was closed, and after 1863, the policy of Russification was extended to all areas of life. Russian was the only language permitted in public use. All education was to be conducted in Russian, and Lithuanian books were only allowed to be printed in the Russian variant of the Cyrillic alphabet (Stranga et al., 2024). In Estonia, the policies were not as harsh (mostly because Estonians were not being punished for revolting). Nonetheless, in 1887, the language of instruction became Russian and in 1893, the University of Tartu (then called University of Dorpat) was Russified (Misiunas et al., 2024). Even though these policies were only in effect for several decades in both countries, they remain crucial in how people of the Baltic States construct the need to protect their language and culture.

These colonial experiences were again refracted during the second Soviet occupation. Mass immigration from Russia changed the demographic composition of the countries, and the state attitudes towards Russian as the dominant language and culture ensured that the newcomers did not attempt to integrate themselves into the local communities. This not only resulted in social conflicts after the Independence of 1991, but also ensured that Russian is perceived as the language of the oppressor and consequently, language, as a possible tool of oppression. Multiple research has shown that to this day, higher education institutions in the Baltic States effectively do not engage with the Russian language. Soler's (2019) analysis of the presence of foreign languages in the physical and online spaces of the University of Tartu, University of Latvia (in Riga) and Vilnius University showed that Russian had "an almost symbolic position" (p. 54) in the first two, and was completely absent from Vilnius University. Given that Soviet-time Russification occasionally masqueraded as "internationalisation", with the more coveted education opportunities only available to those fluent in Russian, the comparisons drawn in both countries are not surprising.

It is precisely the linguistic element that draws in these comparisons. Since internationalisation is predicated on foreign language, and the experience with foreign language is that of domination over the national, internationalisation can then be construed as a threat to the development of national identity. The issue is exacerbated in Estonia, as the University of Tartu, the most international university in the country, also bears the mark of a national university and has to contend with its both national and international character, as illustrated in the documents published in the later period. Soler and Vihman (2018) observe that the idea that Estonians managed to resist Russification for many decades but were now willingly embracing "Englishisation" (p. 36) was often voiced prior and during the public discussion on language issues at the University of Tartu. There is no national university in Lithuania and internationalisation efforts (and results) do not measure to Estonia. The recent strategic plan of Vilnius University, however, follows the national legislation and includes activities related to the development of Lithuanian (Baltic) studies under the topic of internationalisation. Also, the comparison to Soviet times was made as well in the focus groups conducted in Lithuania. The participant stressed that it is, of course, not the same, but suggested that the current university administration would do well to learn from the past experience of how to survive in adverse conditions.

These comparisons point to the prominence of language in the concept of internationalisation and reflects the conceptual change related to the concept of 'Europe' which is not prominent in the semantic field of the later period. First, this shows that internationalisation is still conceptualised as something that happens when something external is involved. The newer notions of internationalisation at home and, especially, internationalisation of curriculum, have not really entered the discourse on internationalisation in Lithuania and Estonia. The conceptualisation is, of course, significantly expanded compared to the 1990s, from academic mobility to the European or Western universities and West-assisted international cooperation, as shown by the emergence of concepts such as international environment and international education market.

The concept of 'Europe' and the West are significantly less prominent in 2000–2020. It is still a point of reference, albeit a less explicit one. Both Lithuania and Estonia joined the European Union and NATO in 2004. It stands to reason that having accomplished what were the greatest aspirations of the 1990s, particularly given the increasing convergence of European higher education due to Pan-European Bologna-process reforms, Eastern European countries may have believed that a certain satisfactory level of 'Europeanness' has been achieved; Eastern Europe has 'returned to Europe'. Yet, when we look at the various invocations of the word 'international', and bear in mind that internationalisation is joined with quality to the point of conflation and, quality, as conceptualised in the 1990s, represents what is done in 'the West', 'international' seems to carry the same positive connotation that 'Western' or 'European' carried in the 1990s.

This is not to say that internationalisation in Eastern Europe is, in essence, Westernization in the sense that internationalisation is limited to engagement with the West. I believe that is not exactly the case. However, that is not what this study aimed to show. It aimed to show how internationalisation is conceptualised and, more importantly, how it came to be conceptualised as such in a region as tumultuous as Eastern Europe after 1990. What we have seen, is that time and space were both crucial to how internationalisation was conceptualised. Brought into the Eastern European higher education discourse at a time when the ultimate goal both inside and outside the region was to 'modernize', it was accepted as part and parcel of a wider neoliberal idea of higher education which competes in a market for students. The bigger the market, the greater the gains, so the international market becomes the goal. Modernization also meant something more than pure economics. It was intertwined with the narrative of Eastern Europe going back to where it belonged, to Europe. Higher education was a tool to bring the societies on this path of progress, but also had to progress itself. The solution was to shed its communist-tainted ‘Eastness’ and follow the example set by the West.

At first, internationalisation was not much more than international cooperation made possible by the vast funds from the West. ‘Whoever pays, gets to pick the music’, as a Lithuanian saying goes, so the relationship between the ‘new Europe’ and the old one was not equal. Economic and epistemic inequalities coalesced to form a path of transition that Eastern Europe was expected to follow. The role internationalisation takes on in the 1990s is to help acquire the necessary knowledge on what higher education should be like to achieve international (Western) standards. During this time, the complicated relationship between internationalisation and quality begins to develop and the market economy goes hand in hand with democracy.

About 20 years later, internationalisation is a ubiquitous and inevitable part of higher education discourse in the two Eastern European countries, Lithuania and Estonia. It refers to quality almost as much as quality refers to internationalisation. Particularly due to this proximity to quality, internationalisation is operationalised as a tool to legitimise education policies. On the surface, internationalisation here does not look much different than in any other part of the world. But the sediments of past meanings shine through, particularly when we consider why ‘international’ is considered a universal good. Back in 1990, all Eastern Europe wanted was to be ‘normal’. Then, becoming ‘normal’ was becoming European, that is, Western European. Internationalisation was introduced as something ‘normal’ countries did, and Eastern Europe followed. There is a metaphysical, epistemic reasoning for becoming ‘normal’ and seeking acceptance. But for Eastern Europe, particularly in the 1990s, there was a practical element as well. In discussing the events of the mid-20th century, Larry Wolff (1996) asserted that “Eastern Europe could only be surrendered because it had long ago been imagined, discovered, claimed, and set apart” (p. 143). It is prudent to think then, that if Eastern Europe manages to become less ‘East’ by becoming more ‘West’, the history may not repeat itself. In this story, internationalisation serves as a shield; it provides hope that upon the next Russian attack, Eastern Europe will be Europe enough to not be surrendered.

CONCLUSIONS

Having conducted the study on the conceptual development of internationalisation in Eastern Europe (Lithuania and Estonia), the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Even though the research on internationalisation during the Soviet period is limited, there is enough evidence to claim that the actual process was limited by political constraints and, conceptually, at least inside the Soviet Union, the word internationalisation was used to refer to Russification policies, which presupposed the precedence of Russian language and culture over those of the other national groups of the empire. Internationalisation, as we know it now, developed particularly throughout the second half of the 20th century, at the end of which individual mobility of the select few was gradually replaced by programmes and projects developed by state actors and universities. The introduction of internationalisation into the higher education discourse of Eastern Europe coincided with the time when economic rationales for internationalisation were becoming increasingly more prevalent across the Western world. Internationalisation, thus, was transferred into the local higher education discourse and practice in the form in which it was presented at the time.
2. Introduction of the concept of internationalisation happened simultaneously with the conceptual re-introduction of Eastern Europe into the European discourse after the formerly occupied countries regained independence. The conceptualisation of Eastern Europe at the time reveals that it was located in a liminal space between its communist past and its modern future. The expectation placed upon a demi-Orientalised Eastern Europe was that in the process of its transition it should progress into Europe, that is, become like the Western Europe, which was considered the norm. The changes in higher education were intrinsically linked with wider societal, political and economic changes, buoyed by the 'modernization theory' and supported by supranational economic institutions which maintained that the introduction of market economy will result in sustainable democracy.
3. The market-based approach found particularly fertile ground in the expanded higher education sector of the 1990s, when the shortage of funds met the growing numbers of students. This is the period when the aspirations for quality, efficiency and meeting the needs of the market emerge in the higher education discourse. These notions are later used to legitimise the return of the state into the governance of higher

education after a period of nearly absolute autonomy. In the early 1990s, university autonomy is reconceptualised as the higher education equivalent of democracy, in response to the heavy involvement of the Soviet regime the universities had to endure before.

4. The tendency to distrust state actors and the evolving European quality assurance movement (part of the Bologna process) foster the emergence of quality discourse in Eastern European higher education. Internationalisation is introduced precisely as part of this discourse, first as a way to glean what is this quality of higher education, believed to be located in the Western countries, and then, to achieve the international standards which are used as a measure of quality. Ever since its introduction to the discourse, quality is aspirational and the future-oriented concept of internationalisation (the process of becoming international) becomes synonymous with quality. Later, it results in a particular conflation where internationalisation is operationalised both as a measure of quality (evaluations and rankings) and a way to achieve it, while quality, in turn, presupposes internationalisation.
5. This positive encoding of internationalisation mimics the positive encoding of the normalised West, particularly when 'international' in Eastern European higher education discourse almost exclusively refers to 'Western' or 'European'. Internationalisation becomes not only a way to achieve quality but also a way to achieve 'Europeanness', in other words, to become 'normal'. Even though the most recent conceptualisation of internationalisation is less West-oriented, its historical development shows that internationalisation in Eastern Europe is not merely a higher education trend. It encompasses the sediments of meanings of the 1990s which link it to internal aspirations and external expectations that by losing its 'Eastness', Eastern Europe will progress into what some called 'the greater Europe'.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Academic articles published between 1990 and 2000 on higher education in Eastern Europe

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SUMMARY (IN LITHUANIAN)

„Man atrodo, kad ko bepaklausi, visi turi savo supratimą apie tai, kas yra tarptautinimas, bet niekas iš tikrųjų nežino“, – taip į mano disertacijos temą sureagavo konferencijoje sutikta mokslininkė iš Estijos. Paradoksalu, tačiau, nepaisant to, jog tarptautinimo apibrėžimų mokslinėje literatūroje tikrai netrūksta, manau, daugelis aukštajame moksle dirbančių kolegų su ja būtų linkę sutikti. Su aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo reiškiniu pirmiausia susidūriau kaip praktikė, tad pirminės idėjos, pastūmėjusios į tarptautinimo tyrimus irgi buvo veikiau praktinės nei išskirtinai mokslinės. Tarptautinimui sparčiai populiarėjant ir užimant vis didesnę dalį auštojo mokslo diskurso, pati dirbdama universitete stebėjausi, kodėl kai kurie fakultetai nepaliaujamai stengiasi užtikrinti, kad jų studentai įgytų kuo daugiau tarptautinės patirties, o kituose atrodo, kad tai niekam nerūpi. Atrodė, jog visi kalba apie studijų ir mokslo tarptautinimą, tačiau kai prireikia jį įgyvendinti, jis tampa beveik efemeriškas.

Pradėjusi gilintis į aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimą iš mokslinės perspektyvos, buvau nustebinta esamų tyrimų gausos. Tiesa, dauguma jų buvo atlikti globaliųjų Vakarų šalyse, kurių XX a. patirtis gerokai skyrėsi nuo manosios. Sovietmečiu „internacionalizacija“ buvo vartojama apibrėžti politikos priemonėms, kurias šiuolaikiniai mokslininkai laiko rusifikacijos dalimi (Grybkauskas, 2013), o realūs akademiniai mainai vyko tik Tarybų Sąjungos viduje. Retais atvejais buvo galima išvykti į Maskvos kontroliuojamas Varšuvos pakto šalis, tačiau šios galimybės taip pat buvo labai ribotos. Buvusioms Rytų bloko šalims atgavus nepriklausomybę, aukštajame moksle (ir ne tik) įsigalėjo siekis „pasivyti Vakarus“. Pagrindinis pirmojo nepriklausomybės dešimtmečio tikslas buvo įstoti į NATO ir Europos Sąjungą, taigi, Europos Komisija buvo pagrindine finansine ir politine tarptautinimo varomąja jėga. Įvykiai panašiai klostėsi didesnėje dalyje teritorijos, kuri dabar dažnai vadinama Vidurio ir Rytų Europa, tai yra, tokiose šalyse kaip Estija, Lenkija, Čekija, Slovėnija ir kitos. Nors pasirinktos priemonės galėjo būti skirtingos, mus visus vienijo noras „pasivyti Vakarus“, arba kaip teigia Holmes ir Krastev (2018), „tapti normaliais“ (p. 118).

Šią disertaciją sudaro du dėmenys – aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo konceptas ir jo raida rytų Europoje. Tai reiškia, kad nors disertacijoje nagrinėjamas tarptautinimo įgyvendinimas pasirinktose dviejose Rytų Europos šalyse (Lietuvoje ir Estijoje), tarptautinimo raiška yra priemonė, padedanti suprasti ir atskleisti tarptautinimo konceptą ir jame telpančias reikšmes. Istorinis žvilgsnis leidžia parodyti šio koncepto formavimosi procesą, suprasti, kodėl šiandien jis yra būtent toks, kokios sąlygos ir procesai darė įtaką jo formavimuisi. Disertacinis tyrimas remiasi prielaida, kad socialiniai procesai, vykstantys konkrečiame regione, daro įtaką konceptų formavimuisi, todėl Rytų Europos kontekstas bei pačios Rytų Europos koncepto gvildenimas yra neatsiejama šio tyrimo dalis.

Kadangi tarptautinimas dažnai kartu yra ir mokslinių tyrimų objektas, ir praktiškai įgyvendinama veikla, jos pavadinimas atrodo pakankamai aiškus, tad tarptautinimo koncepto niuansai moksle nagrinėjami retai. Aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo tyrimų, kurie nagrinėtų šį reiškinį Rytų Europoje yra labai nedaug, o tyrimų, kuriuose būtų gilinamasi į aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo koncepto vystymąsi regione, mano žiniomis, išvis nėra. Anot Bedenlier ir kolegų (2018), šiuolaikiniuose tarptautinimo tyrimuose (1998-2018 m.) išskiriamos dvi pagrindinės kryptys. Pirmoji apima vadybinius tarptautinimo aspektus institucijos viduje, pavyzdžiui, kokybę, strateginę plėtrą ir studijų programas. Antroji kryptis nukreipta į tarptautinimo procese dalyvaujančių žmonių požiūrius ir patirtis, jų poreikius, paramos struktūras ir tapatybės klausimus. Autoriai taip pat pažymi, kad iki šiol tarptautinimo tyrimai daugiausia buvo atliekami anglosaksiškose ir Vakarų Europos šalyse (Bedenlier et al., 2018). Panašios tendencijos pastebimos ir tyrimuose, skirtuose aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimui Vidurio ir Rytų Europoje, kuriuose tarptautinimo konceptas nėra išsamiai analizuojamas (Orechova, 2021).

Dauguma autorių sutinka, kad dabartinis apibrėžimas ir samprata, kas yra aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimas, yra kilęs iš Vakarų pasaulio, kurio socialinės, politinės ir istorinės aplinkybės skiriasi nuo Rytų Europos. Viena vertus, sprendimas nagrinėti klausimą iš regiono perspektyvos pagrįstas tuo, jog pati šiame regione gyvenu ir dirbu, tad geriausiai jį išmanau. Kita vertus, man atrodo svarbu suprasti, kaip konkrečios aplinkybės sąlygoja universaliu aukštajame moksle laikomo reiškinio sampratą konkrečioje sociokultūrinėje erdvėje, šiuo atveju – Rytų Europoje, Estijoje ir Lietuvoje. Be to, kaip pastebi Whitsed ir Green (2014), tarptautinimo reikšmės persvarstymas iš nevakarietiškos perspektyvos galėtų būti laikomas ne tik mūsų mokslinės veikmės (angl. *agency*) raiška, bet ir prisidėti prie netolygaus galios pasiskirstymo sutrikdymo ne tik tarptautinimo, bet ir bendro mokslinio žinojimo kontekste. Šių patirčių reflektavimas gali būti naudingas ir kitiems periferiniais laikomiems aukštojo mokslo regionams Pietų Amerikoje, Afrikoje ar Azijoje.

Teorinės prieigos: konceptualioji istorija ir kritinės diskurso studijos

Šiame darbe sujungiamos dvi teorinės-analitinės prieigos – konceptualiosios istorijos ir kritinių diskurso studijų. Šios prieigos metodologiškai yra gana artimos, nes jose daugiausia naudojama tekstinių duomenų analizė socialiniams ar konceptualiems pokyčiams erdvėje ir laike atskleisti. Pasak diskurso istorinės prieigos (angl. *Discourse-Historical Approach*) tyrėjo Michal Krzyżanowski (2016), dėl vis labiau konceptualėjančio diskurso, konceptualiosios istorijos analitinių konstruktų įtraukimas į diskurso studijas gali padėti kritinių diskurso studijų tyrėjams išsamiau analizuoti vis didesne konceptų gausa pasižyminčius diskursus. Konceptualiosios istorijos tyrimų atstovas Jan Ifversen (2011) atkreipia dėmesį į konceptualią diskurso architektūrą, turėdamas galvoje, kad diskursai plėtojami aplink konceptus, o tam tikras konceptas veikia kaip centrinis taškas, aplink kurį struktūruojamas diskursas.

Šiame tyrime vadovaujuosi koncepto kaip „kelių esminių reikšmių koncentrato“ (Koselleck, 2004, p. 85) samprata iš konceptualiosios istorijos (vok. *Begriffsgeschichte*) teorijos. R. Koselleck (2011) teigia, jog „žodis tampa konceptu kai reikia vieno žodžio, apimančio – ir būtino išreikšti – visas reikšmes, kylančias iš tam tikro socialinio ir politinio konteksto“ (p. 19). Konceptą nuo žodžio skiria jo gebėjimas įsitraukti į veiksmą, kylantį iš tam tikros situacijos ar konteksto (Ifversen, 2011). Nors konceptų istorijai didelę įtaką darė lingvistinis posūkis, svarbu pažymėti, kad „konceptas“ čia nėra lingvistinis terminas. Bendrojoje lingvistikoje kalba laikoma neutralia sritimi. Kita vertus, konceptualieji istorikai į kalbą žvelgia kaip į politinio veiksmo sceną, taigi, į konceptus – kaip į tokio veiksmo varomąją jėgą (Ifversen, 2021). Anot R. Koselleck, bendri konceptai yra šiuolaikinės visuomenės pagrindas: „Be bendrų konceptų negali egzistuoti nei visuomenė, nei bet koks politinis veikimo laukas“ (Koselleck, 2004, p. 76). Čia taip pat pastebime sąsają su kritinėmis diskurso studijomis, kuriose diskursas ir visuomenė laikomi vienas kitą tarpusavyje sąlygojančiais (angl. *mutually constitutive*) (Wodak, 2008). Konceptualioji istorija visų pirma yra susijusi su konceptualiais pokyčiais, kurie atsispindi koncepte glūdinčių daugybės reikšmių kaitoje. Šių reikšminių poslinkių atskleidimas įmanomas tik analizuojant kalbos vartoseną. Todėl kalba vaidina lemiamą vaidmenį tiek kuriant, tiek analizuojant konceptus. R. Koselleck (2002) tvirtino, kad vertinant iš istorinės perspektyvos kalba visada yra savirefleksyvi. Tai reiškia, kad epistemologiškai kalba nurodo į ekstralingvistiką (įvykius) ir kartu į save pačią (Koselleck, 2002).

Visi socialiniai ir politiniai konceptai turi savo daugiasluoksnę kompleksišką vidinę struktūrą. Nors visi konceptai priklauso tam tikram kontekstui, jiems taip pat būdingi pragmatinis ir poleminis elementas, kuris įsirėžia į dabartį, prognostinis elementas, kuris numato ateitį, ir trukmės elementas, kuris išlieka iš praeities (Jordheim, 2012, p. 165). Šis vidinis laikiškumas yra tezės „ne vienalaikiškumo vienalaikiškumas (angl. *simultaneity of the non-simultaneous*)“ pagrindas. Konceptualus kismas nėra semantinis pasikeitimas iš vienos reikšmės į kitą. Kadangi šis kismas vyksta reikšmių, kurios yra istoriškai sąlygotos ir tarpusavyje sąveikauja, visumoje, kurią savyje talpina konceptas, koncepto istorija yra daugiasluoksnė ir susideda iš kelių lygių (Koselleck, 2011, p. 20). Konceptas susiformuoja vienalaikiškomis laiko sąlygomis (tam tikru laiku) ir reiškiasi kalbos aktuose, taigi diskurso santykiuose ir retorikoje, jis gali būti sinchroninės analizės objektu. Tačiau, kadangi į konceptus taip pat įeina elementai, kurie neatsirado tose pačiose laiko sąlygose, bet greičiau yra nuosėdos iš praeities (angl. *sediments*) arba ateities prielaidos (angl. *prefigurations*), analizė turi apimti ir šiuos nevienalaikius aspektus. Šių diachroninių ir sinchroninių elementų sąsajos lemia konceptų istorinį gylį, kuris nėra chronologiškai atliepiamas tos lingvistinės erdvės, kurioje aptinkami konceptai (Jordheim, 2012, p. 170).

R. Koselleck taip pat teigė, kad Apšvietos, revoliucijos ir industrializacijos laikotarpiu (nuo XVII a. 7-ojo dešimtmečio iki XVIII a. 4-ojo dešimtmečio) iš esmės pasikeitė laiko, istorijos ir ateities samprata. Šiuo laikotarpiu europietiškoji modernybė atsirado kaip savirefleksyvus istorinio laiko konceptualizavimo būdas (Steinmetz ir Freeden, 2017). Pasak Koselleck (2011), „visi šie nauji konceptai atsidūrė laiko procese, kuris kiekviename etape registravo istorinius pokyčius ir suteikė jiems prasmę“ (p. 13), t. y., supratimas ir konceptualizavimas vyko tuo pačiu metu. Dar vienas Koselleck aptartas naujųjų laikų aspektas – laiko konceptų (pavyzdžiui, progreso) plitimas ir pačių konceptų laikiškumas. Jis teigė, kad modernūs konceptai diskurse vis dažniau yra įlaikinti (angl. *entimed*). Tai reiškia, kad modernūs konceptai gali būti siejami su praeitimi, dabartimi arba ateitimi. Šie laiko žymenys turi vertinamąjį elementą, kadangi tai yra tolima praeitis, laikina dabartis arba ideali ateitis (Steinmetz ir Freeden, 2017). Toks pačios istorijos laikiškumas, anot Koselleck (2004), lėmė savotišką istorinio laiko pagreitėjimą, dėl kurio atsirado daugybė judėjimo konceptų, pakeitusių ankstesnius statiškus konceptus arba egzistavusių kartu su jais. Daugelyje Europos kalbų tai įvykdavo paprasčiausiai pridėjus priesagą „-izacija“, taip pakeičiant, pavyzdžiui, „demokratija“ į „demokratizaciją“; taip fiksuotos formos konceptas virto besitęsiančiu procesu arba užduotimi ateičiai (Steinmetz ir Freeden, 2017).

Anot Koselleck, politinių ir socialinių konceptų vidinės sandaros pusiausvyra tarp patirties ir lūkesčių iš esmės pasikeitė po XIX a. Iki Apšvietos epochos įvairūs socialiniai ir politiniai konceptai pirmiausia buvo pasitelkiami patirčiai kaupti. Tačiau moderniaisiais laikais naujos sąvokos, turėjusios atverti naują ateitį, pavyzdžiui, demokratizmas, liberalizmas, socializmas, neturėjo patirties erdvės, į kurią būtų galima atsiremti. Tai lėmė, kad sąvokos buvo kuriamos remiantis lūkesčiais, o ne patirtimi, nes „kuo buvo menkesnis jų [konceptų] turinys patirties požiūriu, tuo didesnius lūkesčius jie sukurdavo“ (Koselleck, 2004, p. 129). Pagrindinė visuomenės ir bet kurios politinės veiklos srities konstruojanti jėga yra bendri konceptai, kurie veikia sociopolitinėse sistemose (Koselleck, 2004), taigi šiuolaikiniai konceptai dėl savo laikinės-struktūrinės orientacijos į lūkesčius, o ne į patirtį, „tampa kintančio istorijos judėjimo navigacijos priemonėmis“ (Koselleck, 2002, p. 129). Taip konceptai nebe tik nurodo ar fiksuoja faktus, bet ir tampa pokyčių veiksniais, galinčiais daryti įtaką sąmonei ir elgesiui.

Antrasis esminis tyrimo konstruktas – diskursas – šiame tyrime konceptualizuojamas kaip ne tik kalbinė, bet ir socialinė kategorija. Diskursas reiškia ne tik kalbinį tikrovės vaizdavimą, bet ir socialinę tikrovę, kuri aprašoma ir todėl perkuriama, perkonstruojama tam tikra kalbine forma. Nors tyrime analizuojama kalba ir tekstai, tačiau analizės objektas nėra lingvistinis. Jan Blommaert (2005) diskursą konceptualizuoja kaip „kalbą visuomenėje“ (angl. *language in society*) (p. 16), norėdamas pabrėžti vidinį kalbos ir visuomenės tarpusavio ryšį. Kritinėse diskurso studijose į šią sąsają žvelgiama per socialinio konstruktyvizmo prizmę, kuomet diskursas tiek atliepia socialinę realybę, tiek ją formuoja (Wodak, 2009).

Esama keleto aspektų, kurie leidžia svarstyti apie galimas konceptualiosios istorijos ir kritinių diskurso studijų sankirtas. Kaip pažymi Krzyżanowski (2016), „nepaisant to, kad vartojami skirtingi terminai („diskursas“, suprantamas daugiausia kaip socialinių reikšmių tęstinumas, ir „konceptai“ - kaip istoriškai sąlygiškas tokių reikšmių kaupimas), – [abi prieigos] turi daug bendrų teorinių idėjų apie kalbą ir jos vaidmenį struktūruojant bei perstruktūruojant visuomenę, socialinę tikrovę ir istoriją. Be kita ko, abiems požiūriams bendra idėja, kad kalbos formos (diskursai / konceptai) iš naujo pasirodo – arba, kaip teigiama kritinėse diskurso studijose, yra „rekontekstualizuojami“ įvairiose srityse, erdvėse ir žanruose“ (p. 313). Be to, tiek istorinė diskurso analizės prieiga, tiek konceptualioji istorija daugiau dėmesio skiria struktūroms, kurios atsikartoja, apriboja ar sąlygoja kalbinį ir socialinį veikimą, tačiau ne į atskirus veikėjus.

Tyrimo tikslas ir keliamos hipotezės

Šiame tyrime siekiama ištirti aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo koncepto Rytų Europoje (Lietuvoje ir Estijoje) raidą nuo 1990 iki 2020 metų. Tyrimas struktūruojamas ir įgyvendinamas atsižvelgiant į šias pradiniuose tyrimo etapuose suformuluotas preliminarias hipotezes:

1) aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimas Rytų Europoje yra pasiskolintas konceptas: viena vertus, jis buvo vartojamas TSRS, tačiau turėjo kitokį konceptualų krūvį; kita vertus, jis buvo perkeltas iš „Vakarų“ su 1990-ųjų švietimo reformomis ir šias reformas lydėjusiais lūkesčiais;
2) aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimas yra įveiklinantis (angl. *operationalising*)

konceptas, kuris regiono švietimo diskurse atsirado „transformacijos“ laikotarpiu kartu su ekonominių reformų postūmiu, todėl jam buvo būdinga ekonominė logika, kurią dar labiau sustiprino neoliberalios 2000-ųjų švietimo reformos;
3) aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimas – į ateitį nukreiptas „įlaikintas“ konceptas, naudojamas aukštojo mokslo politikos tikslams legitimuoti ir aukštojo mokslo diskursams operacionalizuoti;
4) aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimas yra įrankis, kuriuo Rytų Europos universitetai naudojasi siekdami savilegitimacijos – tarptautinimas padeda priartėti prie „Vakarų“, suvokiamų kaip norma, ir atitolti nuo „Rytų“, suvokiamų kaip Kitas.

Tyrimo dizainas ir metodologija

Pasirinktos teorinės prieigos sąlygoja metodologinius pasirinkimus bei tyrimo dizainą. Tyrimo metodologija konstruojama remiantis kritinių diskurso studijų istorine prieiga, tačiau iš esmės neprieštarauja konceptualiosios istorijos metodologinėms implikacijoms. Pagrindinis tyrimo tikslas – ištirti aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo koncepto raidą dviejose Rytų Europos šalyse, Estijoje ir Lietuvoje, nuo 1990 iki 2020 metų. Be praktinių priežasčių, lėmusių ribotą tyrimo apimtį, dvi šalys duomenims rinkti buvo pasirinktos turint aiškų tikslą apriboti tiriamo koncepto laiko ir erdvės rėmus (Steinmetz ir Freeden, 2017). Panašus abiejų šalių socialinis-istorinis ir aukštojo mokslo kontekstas leidžia jas nagrinėti tame pačiame erdviniame lauke. Lygindama skirtingų laikotarpių tarptautinimo koncepto semantinius laukus, siekiu parodyti, kas pasikeitė ir kas išliko nepakitę aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo konceptualiojoje architektūroje. Be to, stengiuosi šiuos konceptualius pokyčius ir poslinkius parodyti platesnio Rytų Europos aukštojo mokslo diskurso kontekste.

Kadangi konceptų reikšmės negali būti chronologiškai išvardintos, o egzistuoja kartu, persidengia ar net prieštarauja viena kitai, jų vidinė sinchroninė struktūra yra daugiasluoksnė. Ši daugiasluoksnė sinchroninė struktūra sąlygoja diachroninę koncepto raidą ir ją apibendrina. Siekiant išaiškinti ir atskleisti šią struktūrą, tyrimas apima keletą tarptautinimo koncepto analizių:

1. Tarptautinimo koncepto analizė 2000–2020 m. laikotarpiu. Analizuojami dviejų Lietuvos ir Estijos universitetų parengti politikos dokumentai (10), o duomenys papildomi įžvalgomis iš 3 viename iš universitetetų atliktų fokusuotų diskusijų grupių analizės.
2. Tarptautinimo koncepto analizė 1990–2000 m. laikotarpiu. Duomenų tekstyną sudaro 22 tarptautinėse mokslinių tyrimų duomenų bazėse

talpinami akademiniai straipsniai apie aukštąjį mokslą Rytų Europoje, paskelbti 1990–2000 m. , kuriuose minimas aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimas.

3. Vidurio ir Rytų Europos koncepto tarptautiniame švietimo lauke 1990–2000 m. analizė. Tekstyną sudaro 56 tarptautinės mokslinės publikacijos apie Vidurio ir Rytų Europos švietimą 1990–2000 m., kuriose minimos sąvokos Rytų Europa, Vidurio Europa arba Rytų ir Vidurio Europa.

Pirmosios dvi tyrimo dalys apima aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo koncepto analizę, o trečioje tyrimo dalyje dėmesio centre atsiduria Vidurio ir Rytų Europos konceptas, kadangi šio koncepto raida tyrimo įgyvendinimo metu taip pat atsiskleidė kaip turėjusi reikšmingą įtaką tarptautinimo koncepto raidai. Duomenų rinkimo ir atrankos procedūros visuose trijuose skyriuose buvo atliekamos atskirai, tačiau jos vyko pagal tą pačią sistemą. Trijų rūšių duomenys buvo analizuojami abdukciniu būdu, tai yra, atsižvelgiant į ankstesnius tyrimus ir kitus šio tyrimo skyrius.

Rytų Europos ir tarptautinimo konceptų raidos paralelės

Rytų Europos sampratos analizė tarptautinėje akademinėje mokslinėje literatūroje švietimo ir ugdymo tematika 1990–2000 m. tapo atspirties tašku analizuojant regiono švietimo tarptautinimą tuo pačiu laikotarpiu. Ši analizė leido padaryti svarbių įžvalgų apie Rytų Europos švietimo sistemoms tuo metu keltus lūkesčius. Šie lūkesčiai, neapsiriboję tik švietimu, buvo pastebimi ir 1990–2000 m. tarptautinimo semantiniame lauke. Tai sudaro prielaidas teigti, kad abu procesai ne tik vyko tuo pačiu metu laiko prasme, bet ir tai, kad vieno iš konceptų raida turėjo įtakos kitam – *Rytų Europos* koncepto raida 1990-aisiais turėjo įtakos *tarptautinimo* koncepto raidai. Ši įtaka, žinoma, vėlesniu analizuojamu laikotarpiu susilpnėjo. Nepaisant to, 2000–2020 m. *tarptautinimo* semantinis laukas taip pat vis dar atliepia 10-ajame dešimtmetyje Rytų Europos aukštajame moksle vyravusius diskursus.

1 Paveikslas. *Rytų Europos* konceptų grupės (*Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe*) semantinis laukas tarptautinėse švietimo publikacijose 1990–2000 m.

Rytų Europos konceptų grupės (į kurią įeina konceptai *Rytų Europa, Vidurio Europa, Rytų ir Vidurio* Europa) semantinis laukas (Paveikslas 1) vaizduojamas erdvėje nuo praeities iki ateities. Vienoje šio spektro pusėje – konceptualioji patirties erdvė, kitoje – konceptualusis lūkesčių horizontas. XX a. 10-ajame dešimtmetyje Rytų Europos konceptas vystėsi konceptualioje erdvėje, kuriai didelę įtaką darė modernybės ir modernizacijos konceptai bei lūkesčiais paremti diskursai, kad Rytų Europa „progresuos į moderniąją Europą“ (Szebenyi, 1992, p. 30). Kitaip tariant, Rytų Europa taps pakankamai modernizuota, kad prarastų savo „rytietiškumą“. *Progreso* vyravimas semantiniame lauke ir paties lauko sudėtis rodo modernią (istoriniu požiūriu) sąvokų temporalizaciją (Koselleck, 2011). Kadangi *progresas* yra įlaikintas konceptas, turintis normatyvinę vertę ir priklausantis idealiai ateičiai, o ne praeičiai (Steinmetz ir Freeden, 2017), ši normatyvinė vertė suteikiama ir „moderniajai Europai“.

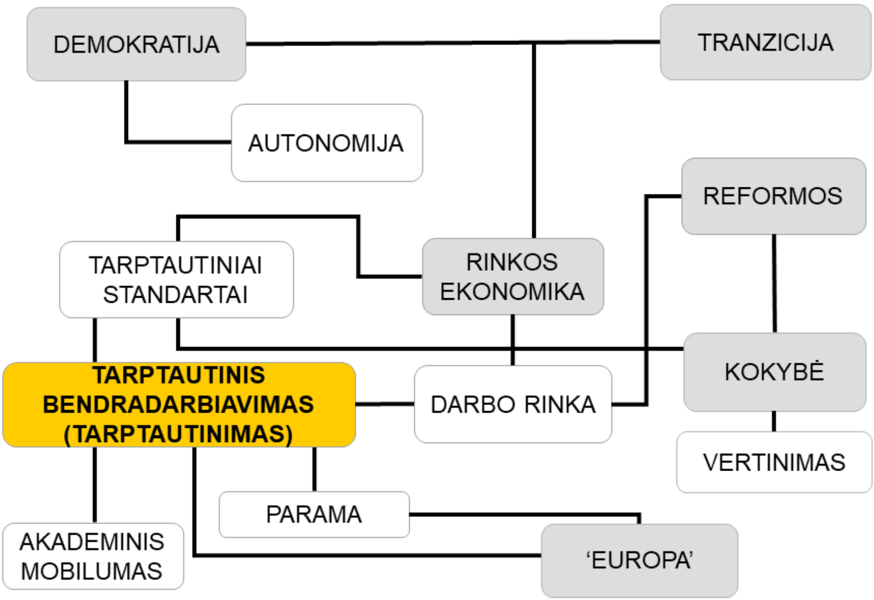
Su komunistine regiono šalių praeitimi susiję konceptai dažnai aiškiai laike koduojami kaip tolimos praeities elementai, vartojant žodžius „buvęs“ ir „po“. Šios asociacijos remiasi Wolff (1996) aptartomis demi-orientalizacijos ir iš to kylančio atsilikimo tropo sąsajomis su Rytų Europos konceptualizacija Apšvietos epochoje. Dėl šios demi-orientalizacijos Rytų Europai, palyginti su „civilizuotais“ Vakarais, teko subordinacinė padėtis civilizacijos ir barbarybės binarinėje skalėje. Nors Rytų Europa nebuvo visiškas Kitas, kaip Rytai, ji vis dėlto buvo priskirta erdvei, susijusiai su atsilikimu ir vystymosi poreikiu

(Wolff, 1996). 1990-ųjų semantiniame lauke matome tuos pačius tropus, kurie šiame kontekste buvo labiausiai reiškiami kalbant apie prastesnę (palyginti su Vakarais) švietimo kokybę Rytų Europoje. Ši įžvalga atliepia Zarycki (2014) argumentą, kad Tarybų Sąjungai praradus simbolinį kapitalą, komunistinė regiono praeitis galėjo būti naudojama kaip jo atsilikimo paaiškinimas. Ji taip pat siejasi su kai kurių modernizacijos teorijos šalininkų nuomone, kad Rytų Europos visuomenės būtų ėjusios Vakarų visuomenių (ir ekonomikų) modernizacijos keliu, jei šio kelio nebūtų užblokavusi tarybinė ideologija (Müller, 1992).

Apskritai, dabarties erdvei šiame semantiniame lauke priskirtini semantiniai elementai – *žinių perkėlimas* ir *parama* – rodo, kad *Rytų Europos* įgyjamos reikšmės neatspindi nusistovėjusio koncepto, o veikiau nurodo galimus pokyčius, kuriuos šis konceptas (ir su juo susijęs regionas) gali patirti. *Tranzicijos* (angl. *transition*) ir *progreso* konceptai rodo normatyvinę šio pokyčio vertę ir, kaip ir atsilikimo bei pasivijimo konceptai, laiko skalėje nukreipia konceptualų pokytį į ateitį. *Rytų Europa* iš esmės konceptualizuojama per priešpriešą tarp jos patirties erdvės ir lūkesčių horizonto. Žvelgiant iš išorės, tikimasi, kad konceptu apibūdinamas regionas atsikratys savo „rytietiškos“ praeities ir pereis į normatyvinę „Europą“. Vertinant iš šių šalių gyventojų perspektyvos, kaip teigia Krastev ir Holmes (2018), pokomunistinių šalių reformatoriai siekė tapti „normaliais“, o norma buvo Vakarai. Paskutiniu XX-ojo amžiaus dešimtmečiu XIX-ojo amžiaus civilizacijos skalę pakeitė modernizacijos skalė, tačiau ir joje Rytų Europa vėl pasirodė esanti menkesnė už normatyvinę Vakarų Europą.

Tarptautinimo konceptas Rytų Europoje: nuo 1990 iki 2000-ųjų

Tarptautinis 10-ojo dešimtmečio Rytų Europos aukštojo mokslo diskursas rodo, kad nors tarptautinės veiklos galimai egzistavo visą universitetų istoriją, tačiau tarptautinimas, kaip jis buvo tuo metu suprantamas, šiame regione buvo gana svetimas konceptas. Iš dalies taip buvo todėl, kad Vakaruose tarptautinimas dar tik vystėsi. Dar svarbiau, ko gero, buvo tai, kad XX a. paskutinysis dešimtmetis šiame regione nebuvo laikas giliems apmąstymams ir svarstymams, kad ir kokie reikalingi jie būtų buvę. Apskritai, tai buvo greitų, dažnai staigių ir nepastovių ekonominių ir socialinių pokyčių metas. Pratęsiant J. Holmén (2020) mintį, kad konceptai iš vienos srities į kitą intensyviausiai keliauja po socialinių ar politinių revoliucijų, galima teigti, kad XX a. 9-asis dešimtmetis Rytų Europoje buvo ypač pralaidus naujų konceptų kūrimo ir perėmimo požiūriu. Tarptautinimo koncepto 1990–2000-aisiais semantinis laukas (Paveikslas 2) taip pat rodo, kad tuometiniame švietimo diskurse vyravo aukštas konceptualumo lygis – diskutuojama apie tokius konceptus kaip autonomija, demokratija, tranzicija, kurie turi kompleksišką semantinį krūvį. Tarptautinimas šiuo laikotarpiu daugiausia konceptualizuojamas per tarptautinį bendradarbiavimą ir akademinius mainus su globalių Vakarų, pirmiausia Vakarų Europos šalių aukštojo mokslo sistemomis. Tačiau šio bendradarbiavimo ir mainų dinamika nėra tolygi, kadangi Rytų Europos aukštasis mokslas suprantamas kaip finansinės ir episteminės paramos gavėjas.



2 Paveikslas. Semantinis *tarptautinimo* laukas tarptautinėse mokslinėse publikacijose apie Vidurio ir Rytų Europos aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimą 1990–2000 m.

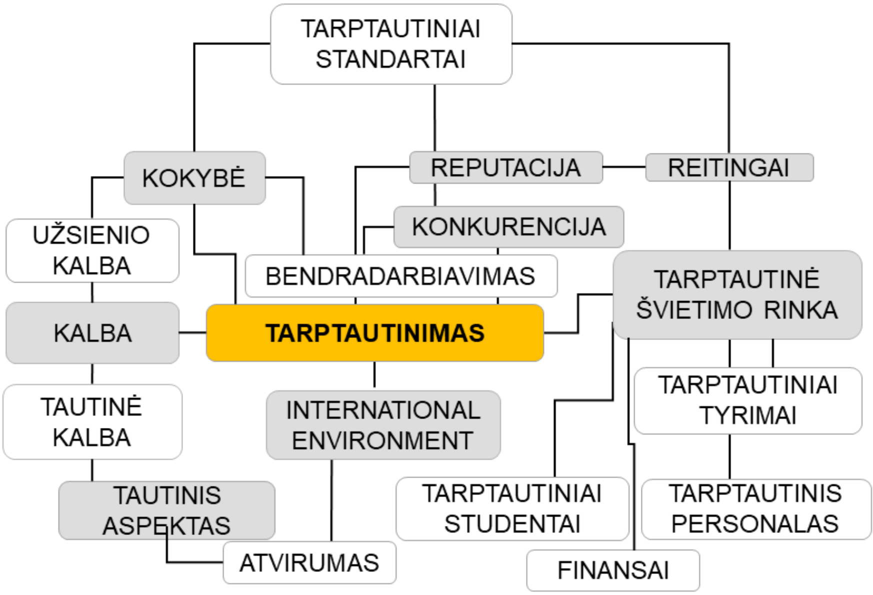
Kaip platesnių aukštojo mokslo komercializavimo tendencijų ir ekonominių tarptautinimo paskatų formavimosi dalis, *kokybės* koncepto vystymasis yra ypač svarbus *tarptautinimo* koncepto raidai. 10-ajame dešimtmetyje naujų įgūdžių ir kompetencijų poreikis, ypač verslo ir vadybos srityje, lėmė augančius norinčių studijuoti aukštosiose mokyklose skaičius, tačiau sunkios ekonominės sąlygos neleido užtikrinti pakankamo aukštojo mokslo finansavimo. Trūkstant finansavimo ir stipriai veikiant neoliberaliajai modernizavimo teorijos atšakai, buvo manoma, kad aukštųjų mokyklų konkurencija lems kokybės gerėjimą. Tomusk (2000) teigė, kad daugelyje Rytų Europos šalių atsakas į aukštojo mokslo sistemos plėtrą buvo kokybės užtikrinimo priemonių diegimas, o didelis dėmesys kokybės užtikrinimui yra vienas bendriausių posocialistinių šalių bruožų. Atitinkamai tiek Lietuvoje, tiek Estijoje šios kokybės užtikrinimo priemonės (dažniausiai vertinimų ir akreditacijų forma) laikomos politikos priemonėmis, naudojamomis siekiant apriboti sistemos plėtrą ir užtikrinti tinkamą kokybės lygį (Leišytė ir kt., 2018; Saar ir Roosalu, 2018). Nors *kokybės* konceptas tuo metu buvo menkai išplėtotas, jis tapo labai svarbus 10-ajame dešimtmetyje ir yra vienas svarbiausių konceptų per visą tyrimo laikotarpį.

Kaip rodo tyrimo rezultatai, *kokybės* koncepto raidai įtaką darė dvi pagrindinės jėgos. Viena vertus, *kokybė* buvo glaudžiai susijusi su „rinkos“ poreikiais – tiek darbo rinkos, tiek rinkos ekonomikos. Buvo tikimasi, kad kokybiškas aukštasis mokslas bus ekonomiškai naudingas ir absolventams, tai yra, patenkins darbo rinkos ir individo poreikius, ir aukštosioms mokykloms užtikrins, kad jos turėtų pakankamai lėšų veiklai vykdyti. Antroji *kokybę* konceptualizuojanti jėga buvo *tarptautinių standartų* laikymasis. Tai galime susieti su Tomusk (2000) teiginiu, kad šio laikotarpio kokybės diskursas yra naudojamas politikos priemonėms legitimuoti ir grindžiamas prielaida, kad egzistuoja universalios kokybės apibrėžtys ir šablonai, kuriuos galima rasti pirmaujančiuose Vakarų šalių universitetuose.

Tarptautinis bendradarbiavimas, kuris reiškė tarptautinimą, šiuo laikotarpiu buvo suvokiamas kaip būdas pasiekti minėtus tarptautinius standartus, taigi, kokybę. Nelygiavertis bendradarbiavimo pobūdis, kai episteminė galia ir ištekliai buvo Vakarų pusėje, skatino instrumentinę ir gana siaurą tarptautinimo sampratą. Itin smarkiai veikiamas veiksnių, esančių už regiono ir švietimo srities ribų, *tarptautinimas* buvo suvokiamas kaip būdas įgyti reikiamų žinių apie tai, koks turėtų būti aukštasis mokslas, kad būtų pasiekti tarptautiniai (vakarietiški) standartai. Buvo manoma, kad tai savo ruožtu turėtų padėti Rytų Europos aukštojo mokslo sistemoms ir visuomenėms būti priimtoms į kaip siekiamybė konceptualizuotą „didžiąją Europą“.

Tarptautinimas Lietuvos ir Estijos universitetų diskurse: nuo 2000 iki 2020-ųjų

Antruoju tyrimo laikotarpiu tarptautinimo koncepto apimtis gerokai išsiplėtė, tai patvirtina ir semantinio lauko sandara. Pirmuoju laikotarpiu *tarptautinimas* pirmiausia konceptualizuojamas kaip tarptautinis bendradarbiavimas ir yra tik vienas iš daugelio aukštojo mokslo lauke vyraujančių konceptų. Antruoju laikotarpiu tarptautinimo konceptas yra vienas iš pagrindinių aukštojo mokslo diskurse, o galimos *tarptautinimo* reikšmės yra gerokai įvairesnės. Didėjantį koncepto daugiaprasmiškumą pabrėžia tokių konceptų kaip *tarptautinė aplinka* ir *tarptautinė švietimo rinka*, atsiradimas, kurios pačios yra semantiškai plačios ir neaiškios. *Tarptautinimas* taip pat tvirtai įsitvirtina platesnėje šio laikotarpio aukštojo mokslo diskursyvinėje struktūroje, kaip rodo sąsajos su tokiais konceptais kaip *kokybė*, *konkurencija* ar *reitingai*. Visi šie konceptai yra platesni (didesni) už *tarptautinimą*, tačiau konceptualiai jie yra glaudžiai susiję su *tarptautinimu*.



3 Paveikslas. Semantinis *tarptautinimo* laukas dviejų Estijos ir Lietuvos universitetų diskurse 2000–2020 m.

Platus susijusių konceptų tinklas ne tik parodo tarptautinimo svarbą universitetų diskurse, bet ir leidžia pamatyti įvairius tarptautinimo operacionalizavimo būdus. Tarptautinimas konceptualizuojamas kaip procesas, kuris turėtų padidinti universiteto konkurencingumą *reitinguose* ir *tarptautinėje švietimo rinkoje*; pagerinti jo *reputaciją* tarp tarptautinių veikėjų, potencialių studentų ir darbuotojų. *Tarptautinio personalo* ir *studentų* įtraukimas padeda puoselėti *tarptautinę aplinką*, kuri yra sėkmingo aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimo sąlyga ir įrodymas. Kadangi žodis „tarptautinis“ turi normatyvinę „geresnio“ reikšmę, tarptautinimas taip pat yra priemonė gerinti *kokybę* ir jos įrodymas.

Konceptualus ryšys tarp *kokybės* ir *tarptautinimo* yra ypač svarbus, o jo šaknys pastebimos ankstesniame laikotarpyje. Kadangi menkai konceptualizuota *kokybė* buvo laikoma galutiniu aukštojo mokslo tikslu, ji glaudžiai susieta su tarptautiniu bendradarbiavimu. Buvo manoma, kad tarptautinė veikla užtikrina arba bent jau skatina siekti kokybės. Šių dviejų konceptų suartėjimas rodo jų bendrą normatyvumą. Tiek kokybė, tiek tarptautinimas gali būti naudojami kaip aukštojo mokslo institucijų vertinimo priemonės. Be to, abu šie konceptai operacionalizuojami siekiant įvairių politinių tikslų, taip vienas kitą papildydami: tarptautinimas vardan kokybės ir kokybė vardan tarptautinimo. Dominuojančiame diskurse teigiama, kad tik tarptautinės aukštosios mokyklos teikia kokybišką išsilavinimą. Ir atvirkščiai – aukštos kokybės aukštasis mokslas yra tarptautinis.

Tarptautinimas, kitaip nei *kokybė*, suvokiamas kaip kažkas, kas yra natūralu aukštajam mokslui (ypač mokslinių tyrimų srityje), visur esantis ir neišvengiamas. Šis neišvengiamo tarptautinimo diskursas rodo, kaip giliai šis konceptas yra įsišaknijęs šiuolaikinio Rytų Europos aukštojo mokslo sampratoje; jis taip pat rodo, kad tarptautinimas yra siekiamybė. Kaip ir 1990-ųjų kokybės atveju, tarptautiška yra kažkas, kuo universitetai „turi būti“. Tarptautinimas pagal savo gramatinę formą yra labiau ne būsena, kurią galima pasiekti tam tikru momentu, bet procesas. Angliškas žodis „*internationalisation*“ yra sudėtinis daiktavardis, vartojamas „tapimo tarptautiniu“ procesui įvardyti. Ši gramatinė forma taip pat leidžia, iš konceptualiosios istorijos perspektyvos, tarptautinimą laikyti moderniu (istorine prasme) į ateitį orientuotu konceptu. R. Koselleck teigė, kad modernybėje konceptai pereina nuo būsenos prie siekimo proceso, demokratijos apibūdinimas pakeičiama demokratizacija. Tokiu būdu konceptai nebe tik nurodo faktus, bet ir tampa pokyčių veiksniais (Koselleck, 2002). R. Koselleck (2011) taip pat teigė, kad toks konceptų laikiškumo procesas, kai reikšminga dalis koncepto reikšmių yra susieta su jo lūkesčių horizontu, veda prie vis abstraktesnių konceptų, kuriems atskirti reikia papildomų apibūdinimų. Nors tai nėra būdinga Rytų Europai, modifikuotų tarptautinimo sąvokų (visuminio (angl. *comprehensive internationalisation*), kritinio (angl. *critical internationalisation*), protingo (angl. *intelligent internationalisation*)) gausa rodo, kad tarptautinimas iš tiesų gali būti laikomas modernaus į ateitį nukreipto koncepto pavyzdžiu.

2000–2020 m. laikotarpiu *Europos* konceptas yra gerokai mažiau svarbus. Lietuva ir Estija 2004 m. įstojo į Europos Sąjungą ir NATO. Logiška, kad įgyvendinusios tai, kas buvo suvokiama kaip didžiausi XX a. 10-ojo dešimtmečio siekiai, ypač atsižvelgiant Europos aukštojo mokslo sistemų panašėjimą dėl Bolonijos proceso reformų, Rytų Europos šalys galėjo manyti, kad pasiektas tam tikras jas tenkinantis „europietiškumo“ lygis, t.y. Rytų Europa „grįžo į Europą“. Vis dėlto, verta atkreipti dėmesį, kad įvairios žodžio „tarptautinis“ variacijos vartojamos labai dažnai. Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad *tarptautinimas* yra susietas su *kokybe*, o *kokybė* 10-ajame dešimtmetyje reiškė tai, kas daroma „Vakaruose“, galima daryti prielaidą, kad „tarptautinis“

dabartinėje vartosenoje turi tą patį teigiamą reikšmės atspalvį, kurį 10-ajame dešimtmetyje turėjo „vakarietiškas“ arba „europietiškas“.

Šiuo tyrimu siekiau parodyti, kaip *tarptautinimas* buvo konceptualizuojamas Rytų Europos regione sudėtingu laiku po 1990-ųjų. Paaiškėjo, kad laikas ir erdvė buvo labai svarbūs *tarptautinimo* koncepto raidai. Įtrauktas į Rytų Europos aukštojo mokslo diskursą kai galutinis tikslas tiek regione, tiek už jo ribų buvo modernizacija, *tarptautinimas* buvo suvoktas kaip neatsiejama platesnės neoliberalios aukštojo mokslo, idėjos, siejamos su konkurencija, dalis. Kuo didesnė rinka, tuo didesnis pelnas, todėl siekiamybe tampa tarptautinė rinka. Modernizacija taip pat reiškė daugiau nei ekonominius ir technologinius pokyčius. Diskurse ji buvo persipynusi su naratyvu apie Rytų Europos grįžimą ten, kur jai priklauso – į Europą. Aukštasis mokslas buvo ir įrankis, padedantis visuomenėms žengti šiuo progreso keliu, bet ir pats turėjo siekti pažangos, atsikratydamas komunistinio rytietiškumo ir sekdamas Vakarų pavyzdžiu.

Iš pradžių *tarptautinimas* buvo ne daugiau nei tarptautinis bendradarbiavimas, įmanomas dėl iš Vakarų plaukiančio finansavimo. Santykiai tarp „naujosios“ ir „senosios“ Europos nebuvo lygiaverčiai – ekonominė ir episteminė nelygybė susiliejo į perėjimo (angl. *transition*) kelią, kuriuo turėjo eiti Rytų Europa. 10-ajame dešimtmetyje tarptautinimui priskiriamas lūkestis padėti įgyti reikiamų žinių apie tai, koks turėtų būti aukštasis mokslas, kad pasiektų tarptautinius (vakarietiškus) standartus. Tuo metu taip pat pradeda plėtotis sudėtingas tarptautinimo ir kokybės santykis, o rinkos ekonomika žengia koja kojon su demokratija. Praėjus maždaug dvidešimčiai metų, tarptautinimas analizuotose Rytų Europos šalyse – Lietuvoje ir Estijoje – yra visur esanti ir neišvengiama aukštojo mokslo diskurso dalis. Ji susijusi su kokybe beveik tiek pat, kiek kokybė susijusi su tarptautiškumu. Ypač dėl šio artumo kokybei tarptautinimas operacionalizuojamas kaip švietimo politikos legitimavimo priemonė.

Iš pirmo žvilgsnio *tarptautinimas* šiame regione atrodo nedaug besiskiriantis nuo *tarptautinimo* bet kurioje kitoje pasaulio dalyje. Vis dėlto praeities reikšmių nuosėdos išryškėja, ypač kai svarstome, kodėl „tarptautinis“ visuomet suprantamas teigiamai. 1990 m. (o greičiausiai ir 1940 m.) Rytų Europa tenorėjo būti „normali“. Tada tapti „normalia“ reiškė tapti europietiška, t. y. integruotis į Vakarų Europą. Tarptautinimas 1990-aisiais į diskursą žengia kaip kažkas, ką daro „normalios“ šalys, ir Rytų Europa šiuo pavyzdžiu nusprendžia sekti. Siekį tapti „normaliais“ ir būti pripažintais sąlygoja metafizinės, episteminės priežastys. Tačiau šis Rytų Europos siekis, ypač dešimtajame dešimtmetyje, turėjo ir praktinį elementą. Aptardamas XX a. vidurio įvykius, Larry Wolff (1996) teigia, kad „Rytų Europa galėjo būti atiduota tik todėl, kad ji jau seniai buvo įsivaizduota, atrasta ir atskirta“ (p. 143). Įvertinus šį istorinį ir tam tikra prasme kultūrinį kontekstą, nesunku suprasti, kodėl buvo galima manyti, kad jei Rytų Europa sugebės tapti mažiau „Rytais“, tapdama labiau „Vakarais“, istorija gali nebepasikartoti. Šiame naratyve tarptautinimas tampa metaforišku skydu, viliantis, kad, Rusijai užpuolus kitą kartą, Rytų Europa bus pakankamai europietiška, kad nebebūtų atiduota.

Išvados

Atlikus tarptautinimo koncepto raidos Rytų Europoje (Lietuvoje ir Estijoje) tyrimą, daromos šios išvados:

1. Nors tarybinės okupacijos laikotarpio tarptautinimo tyrimų įžvalgos yra ganėtinai ribotos, galima teigti, kad faktinį tarptautinimo procesą šiuo laikotarpiu ribojo politiniai suvaržymai, o konceptualiai, bent jau Tarybų Sąjungoje, žodis „tarptautinimas“ (internacionalizacija) buvo vartojamas kalbant apie rusifikacijos politiką, kuri suponavo rusų kalbos ir kultūros viršenybę kitų imperijos tautinių grupių atžvilgiu. Tarptautinimas, toks, kokį jį suprantame dabar, iš esmės plėtojosi antrojoje XX-ojo amžiaus pusėje, kurios pabaigoje elitistinį individualų mobilumą palaipsniui keitė vyriausybių ir universitetų parengtos programos ir projektai. Tarptautinimo įsiliejimas į Rytų Europos aukštojo mokslo diskursą vyko tuo metu, kai Vakaruose vis labiau plito ekonominės tarptautinimo priežastys. Taigi, tarptautinimas buvo perkeltas į regiono aukštojo mokslo diskursą ir praktiką tokia forma, kokia jis buvo konceptualizuojamas perkėlimo metu.
2. Tarptautinimo konceptas buvo pradėtas vartoti tuo metu, kai buvusios okupuotos šalys atgavo nepriklausomybę ir į bendrą Europos diskursą buvo konceptualiai įtraukta Rytų Europa. Tuometinis Rytų Europos konceptualizavimas atskleidžia, kad ji buvo atsidūrusi ribinėje erdvėje tarp komunistinės praeities ir modernios ateities. Iš demi-orientalizuotos Rytų Europos buvo tikimasi, kad po pereinamojo laikotarpio ji taps europietiška, t. y. panaši į Vakarų Europą, kuri buvo laikoma norma. Pokyčiai aukštajame moksle buvo neatsiejami nuo platesnių visuomeninių, politinių ir ekonominių pokyčių, kuriuos skatino modernizacijos teorija ir rėmė viršvalstybinės ekonominės institucijos, tvirtinusios, kad rinkos ekonomikos plėtra lems tvarią demokratiją.
3. Rinka grindžiamas požiūris rado ypač palankią dirvą 1990-aisiais išsiplėtusiame aukštojo mokslo sektoriuje, kai lėšų trūkumas sutapo su studentų skaičiaus augimu. Šiuo laikotarpiu aukštojo mokslo diskurse taip pat pradeda ryškėti kokybės, efektyvumo ir rinkos poreikių

tenkinimo siekiai. Vėliau šie konceptai naudojami siekiant pagrįsti ir legitimuoti valstybės įsitraukimą į aukštojo mokslo valdymą po beveik absoliučios autonomijos laikotarpio.

4. Tendencija nepasitikėti valstybės veikėjais ir besivystantis Europos kokybės užtikrinimo judėjimas (Bolonijos proceso dalis) paskatina kokybės diskurso atsiradimą Rytų Europos aukštajame moksle. Tarptautinimas pirmiausia konceptualizuojamas būtent kaip kokybės diskurso dalis, pirmiausia kaip būdas išsiaiškinti, kas yra toji aukštojo mokslo kokybė, kuri, kaip manoma, yra Vakarų šalyse, o vėliau – pasiekti tarptautinius standartus, kurie naudojami kaip aukštojo mokslo kokybės matas. Nuo pat jos atsiradimo diskurse, kokybė yra suvokiama kaip siekiamybė, o į ateitį nukreiptas tarptautinimo konceptas tampa kokybės sinonimu. Vėliau tai lemia ypatingą persipynimą, kai tarptautinimas operacionalizuojamas kaip kokybės matas (vertinimai ir reitingai) ir būdas jai pasiekti, o kokybė savo ruožtu suponuoja tarptautinimą.
5. Toks teigiamas tarptautinimo kodavimas atkartoja teigiamą normalizuotų Vakarų kodavimą, ypač kai „tarptautinis“ Rytų Europos aukštojo mokslo diskurse beveik išimtinai reiškia „vakarietišką“ arba „europietišką“. Taip tarptautinimas tampa ne tik būdu pasiekti kokybę, bet ir būdu pasiekti „europietiškumą“, kitaip tariant, tapti „normaliu“. Nors dabartinis tarptautinimo konceptualizavimas yra mažiau orientuotas į Vakarus, jo istorinė raida rodo, kad tarptautinimas Rytų Europoje nėra tik aukštojo mokslo tendencija. Tarptautinimo konceptas apima ir XX a. 10-ojo dešimtmečio reikšmių nuosėdas, kurios jį susieja su vidiniais siekiais ir išoriniais lūkesčiais, kad praradusi savo „rytietiškumą“ Rytų Europa progresuos į tai, ką kai kurie autoriai vadino *the greater Europe* („didžiąja Europa“).

Monika Orechova yra Vilniaus universiteto Ugdymo mokslų instituto direktorės pavaduotoja, turinti ilgametę švietimo vadybos patirtį ir šiuo metu nagrinėjanti aukštojo mokslo tarptautinimą Rytų ir Vidurio Europoje. Kita jos mokslinė veikla apima aukštojo mokslo didaktiką, lygybės, įvairovės ir įtraukties klausimus aukštajame moksle, lyginamąją edukologiją ir konceptų istoriją. Monika yra Lietuvos edukacinių tyrimų asociacijos narė.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To be frank, this is the section that I had started writing first, at least in my head. Throughout these years, I have kept a mental running list of all the great people I have met throughout the years of working on my PhD and I am still almost certain than someone will have slipped away. As challenging as the past years have been, it was no match for the support of those around me.

First, I would like to thank my spiritual alma mater, the institution that has allowed me the space to become the professional and the person that I am today, the Vilnius University Centre of Oriental Studies (now, the Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies). When I started working there over a decade ago, I had little idea that I would move on to research higher education. But all the hardworking, passionate and kind people I have met there showed me an academia that I had not yet seen at the time, one that could be. I will always be proud of having been a part of this community.

I am also grateful to the Institute of Education which accepted my out of left field topic and then allowed me to develop it into something I could be proud of. A special thanks goes to administrators Eglė and Rosita, for their support, including but not limited to sharing their office when I needed a workplace, laughing at my morbid jokes, and maintaining conviction than one of these days I would finally be done with this thesis. Ladies, that day has come!

Another thanks goes to the Center for Equality Advancement which was my place of employment for a significant part of my PhD journey. Thank you for believing in me, helping me feed my passion of doing tangible things while pondering the intangible, and creating the most supportive working environment that a PhD student (or anyone, really) could ever hope for. You have helped me grow into the woman I am today and I will cherish the time I have spent among you for years to come.

I am also grateful to my Intercultural Communication students, who unbeknowst to them (and for a long time, even me) have been a grounding force and a source of inspiration throughout this process. I believe that you all have the capacity to build a most beautiful world and I will try to do my best to help you along the way.

Even though a significant portion of my research time passed during a global pandemic, I have met a number of great colleagues from around the world due to both online and in-person schools and conferences and these encounters have definitely enriched my thinking on what later became the core of this thesis. In no particular order and with very little context, a heartfelt thanks goes to:

- Rob Gray, for making poetry and higher education teaching merge so firmly in my head that I am now considering the use of poetry readings as introductions to my classes;

- Jani Marjanen and Martin Burke, for leading a summer school on concepts (of all things!), for accepting a non-historian me in the community of historians of concepts, for laughing at my jokes during the conference presentations and, most importantly, commiserating on the tough crowds of those did not laugh at said jokes;

- Simon Warren, for somehow coming up with the outrageous idea that my work could become a part of an international symposium at ECER and a special issue; for your compassion, and understanding, and encouragement at precisely the right time and in the right place;

Closer to home, my supervising team, supervisor Irena Stonkuvienė and consultant Rimantas Želvys, have been a tremendous support in this process. You have both in your own way struck a complicated balance of challenging and supporting and I have become better for it. You have never for one second made me feel smaller or less knowledgeable than you, though that last one is definitely an objective fact. Professor Želvys, thank you for sharing your vast knowledge and expertise on the subject of this thesis but even more so, thank you for building an environment around you that is conducive to the growth of young researchers like me. You have built the foundation on which I, and quite a few others, stand.

Irena, this has been an adventure for both of us. Thank you for signing up for it in the first place. If there was ever a choice I had made in this process that I am fully content with, it is the one to choose you as my supervisor. Thank you for your patience when I dragged the expected 4 years into however many this ended up taking. Thank you for always putting me and my well-being first. Thank you for encouraging me to try things and signing off on all of my crazy ideas. In a context where we are all clever (or so the saying goes), you distinguish yourself by being kind. I consider myself very lucky to have met you.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Vita Venslovaitė, a great colleague at the Institute of Education and the ultimate supporter of the vast majority of the PhD students here. The genuine care and thoughtful insights you have provided throughout the years have shaped not only mine but many others' theses. I remain in awe of your ability to grasp the ideas in the chaos of their birth and share your thoughts in a constructive and supportive way.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank my parents who have instilled in me my love for books and never attempted to curtail my desire to question everything, sometimes at the peril of their own peace of mind. To my mother, for being a living example of the fact that courage is not an absence of fear but rather perseverance despite its presence. To my father, for bringing me up as my own person, for supporting me unconditionally, for not letting me quit learning English 23 years ago. You have both done your best and some more to ensure I had a much bigger world than you did. It is largely a coincidence after all, but I am happy to be your daughter.

My friends Egidijus and Fabio, for (almost) never asking how this is going, when it will be finished and generally being awesome people who patiently waited out my long absences, listened to me whine and sagely reminded me that there are so many things in life much more important than a PhD thesis. Justina, for being the best of us (I stand by this assessment) but also at different times, a fellow PhD student, a colleague and a mentor. Your thesis was the ultimate inspiration to obsess over quality rather than temporal expectations.

Another thanks is to my personal and professional mentor, and a dear friend, Vytis. We see the world from such different angles that when we happen to arrive at the same thing, I trust it to be at least a somewhat close approximation of how things truly are. You have been present for so many of the big and small things I have achieved, supporting me always, without exception, without reservation. I am still amazed at the capacity of your thought but even more so, at how much you care for those around you. I am honoured to find myself among them.

Rūta, it seems almost serendipitous that after all the times our paths crossed and then uncrossed, we ended up in room 411, talking way too much about everything but mostly about higher education. Thank you for being there for me through most of this, for supporting my ideas and sharing yours. I am slightly baffled that so many of them seem to have worked out but then, if I may doubt myself, I cannot fathom a reason to doubt you. You are phenomenal at what you do, whatever you decide to do; you are the strongest woman I know; it is a privilege to be your friend.

And, frankly, probably more than anyone else, I want to extend my thanks to Andrius, my partner, and my friend. Partners of PhD students could write the longest monographs on the trials and tribulations of living with a dissertation writing gremlin but as I now try to recall at least a single instance of you complaining about anything related to my PhD, I am coming up empty. You have never, not even once, doubted whether I would finish this thesis (and I doubted many times), you did not judge me for all the needless sacrifice for it and you never pushed me to do anything more or less that what I myself wanted to do. Your support never wavered and you did not set a single expectation for me. It was liberating and exhilarating to hear you say “You’ll finish when you’ll finish and if you don’t finish, it will not change anything about you”. You inspire me every single day to grow and see the world from a different angle. You challenge me and you cherish me; you are the wind in my sails and the port I come back to. Thank you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monika Orechova is one of the primary internationalisation researchers in Lithuania and has published her research both locally and internationally. Her PhD thesis tackles the development of the concept of internationalisation in Eastern Europe. Monika is also a member of the Lithuanian Educational Research Association. Her other research interests include higher education didactics, equity, diversity and inclusion in higher education, comparative education and history of concepts.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1. Orechova, M. (2021). Internationalisation of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe: conceptualisation of the definition inside the region. *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia*, 46, 119-131. doi:10.15388/ActPaed.46.2021.8
2. Orechova, M. (2023) What do we talk about when we talk about internationalisation: academics' attitudes towards higher education internationalisation in an Eastern European university. *Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica. Journal of Theories and Research in Education*, *18*(1)*,* 143–158. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1970-2221/15303
3. Orechova, M. (2023) That other Europe: The conceptualization of Central and Eastern Europe in (higher) education research from 1990 to 2000. *Studia Litteraria et Historica*, *2023*(12), Article 3095. https://doi.org/10.11649/slh.3095

NOTES

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