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*Analysing Knowledge Policy Coordination for the 21st Century*

**Title of the paper**

*National Policy and Market Forces: Using the German Model of  
Transnationalisation of Higher Education to Redefine the Role of the Nation  
State in a Marketised Education Field*

**Authors**

*Nadin Fromm, University of Kassel (Germany),*

[nfromm@uni-kassel.de](mailto:nfromm@uni-kassel.de)

*Alexander Raev, University of Tuebingen (Germany),*

[alexander.raev@ifp.uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:alexander.raev@ifp.uni-tuebingen.de)

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## **Abstract**

Beginning in the 1990s, when transnationalisation of higher education became a relevant topic within the constantly internationalizing global tertiary education sector, a massive growth of various transnational higher education projects can be observed worldwide. Based on the idea of a globalized knowledge society and increasingly globalized knowledge markets, transnational higher education is commonly seen as the consequence of an ever-expanding demand for internationalized education. Drivers of this demand are nation states as well as individuals mostly from the academic sector trying to address political and socio-economic challenges of the emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century through accessing TNE. Our paper aims at contributing to the discussion of the role nation states play for TNE provision by questioning various functionalities of TNE across national contexts (profit or market orientation versus TNE as a political instrument). By using the German model of TNE as a template in contrast to other active provider countries (Australia, UK, USA), we discuss relevant factors which lead to different modes of policy coordination in collusion with differing functionalities of TNE seen from the perspective of policy makers on the nation-state level. Using this conceptualisation, we find evidence that German TNE-projects venture with the support of state actors into territories and fields of study, which were overlooked by most other for-profit TNE-providers from other countries.

**Keywords:** transnationalisation of higher education, German model, state regulation, funding schemes, strategic frames

## 1. Introduction

Transnational (higher) education (TNE), understood as international program and provider mobility (Knight and McNamara 2017), is a highly dynamic and fast growing field within the larger sector of higher education. Since the 1990s, when TNE became a relevant element of the constantly internationalising tertiary education sector, a massive growth of very different TNE-projects can be observed worldwide (DAAD and DZHW 2016: 86ff.). Based on the idea of a globalised knowledge society, the TNE-sector<sup>1</sup> can be seen from this perspective as the consequence of differing demand structures meeting differing supply lines for internationalised (higher) education. TNE provisions are initiated by nation-states and individuals mostly from the academic sector alike, trying to address political, cultural and socio-economic demands which increasingly globalised and fast changing labour markets of the emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century request (Ziguras and McBurnie 2015). Regarding the current research on TNE (e. g. Knight and McNamara 2016), a fuzziness of the term itself and its various modes of delivery ranging from distance learning concepts and small study programmes to full-grown branch campuses or bi-national universities become apparent and is still a predominant and on-going issue in the current scholarly debate about TNE (Knight and McNamara 2017). As a consequence of lacking comprehensive and internationally comparative research, scientific analyses on TNE remain challenging, often being reduced to (single) case studies concentrating mainly on simplified “science market” assumptions (Wildavsky 2010; Knight 2012). The current research on TNE largely overlooks the role national actors play within the planning and implementation processes (Fromm 2013), which make comparisons or even attempts at theorisation of TNE as a phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century rather difficult. At the same time, internationally comparable data on TNE “export” or TNE “import” on a country by country basis is rather poor and hard to come by with available data allowing only generalized statements of TNE growth on a global and internationally comparable level (Knight and McNamara 2017).

Based on these presumptions, our paper aims at contributing to the discussion by focusing on the roles that nation state regulation and funding activities play for the provision of TNE by questioning various functionalities of TNE across national contexts (profit or market orientation versus TNE as a (national) political instrument). We therefore explore the main characteristics of the German TNE model with its specific multi-level governance modes, distinguishing it from the TNE sectors of other countries, such as Australia, United Kingdom as well as the USA. We claim that a substantial part of German TNE, is guided and fostered by a national policy agenda of a regulatory nature which results in steering, funding and implementing activities by state actors which is simultaneously being regulated by a second type of de-facto policy makers, so-called intermediate agencies, which function as satellites of state regulation, despite being largely non-state in nature<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1998 around 1.9 Million Students crossed borders in search of higher education, while in 2014 4.4 Million students were internationally mobile (DAAD 2017).

<sup>2</sup> For the role of intermediary agencies in the German higher education sphere, see Kreckel 2015: 67 ff.

Furthermore, we aim at adding to the current debate the perspective of a ‘politicised’ TNE using the activities of Germany as a template, contesting therefore the common perspective that TNE is associated with the prevalent increase of internationalized higher education provisions driven by market demand and the pursuit of either financial resources or reputation in ever converging forms of higher education (Wildavsky 2010; Knight 2012; Raev 2016: 237 ff.). The increasing politicisation of the German TNE sector can be regarded as a side effect of the involvement of different state and quasi-state actors as well as a dynamic which takes hold of the field of German TNE and which also includes the highly-motivated involvement of non-state actors, such as higher education institutions (HEIs). In our paper, we are aiming at finding evidence for a politicisation of the German TNE-sector while analysing the modes of policy coordination of the different actors and their effect on the implementation of German TNE-projects abroad. Following Michael Zürn and his take on Niklas Luhman’s systems theory, we understand politicisation as “primarily a problem of sectoral allocation of competencies“ (Zürn 2013: 15). For our understanding, the definition of politicisation of TNE has to be extended by another dimension whereby national actors seek to “expand their power base“ (Haus 2008: 97) by broadening “their playing field for policy making“ (ibid.) while at the same time “new questions appear on the agenda, without old questions being removed“ (ibid.), a process that is often referred to as “policy layering” (Hacker 2004). Politicisation therefore means for the field of German TNE primarily a redefinition and expansion of objectives by state actors, with a simultaneous renegotiation of competencies conducted by the individual actors, especially on the level of federal ministries.

To explain the multi-actor governance and analyse the actor’s playing field behind German TNE we use the Actor Centred Institutionalism (Mayntz and Scharpf 1995; Scharpf 2000) as a heuristic device. As such, we consider the German TNE-approach as a complex policy coordination problem with conflicting but often overlapping areas of interest and politically charged rationales of different actors included in a field otherwise geared toward profit and reputation (Zürn 2013: 15). Our empirical findings are based on qualitative interviews of German policy makers within the field and refer to the time period 2001-2016. By reconnecting the specific “German” model of TNE to the demand of internationalised higher education by foreign governments and academic entrepreneurs abroad, we will be able to conceptualise a model of TNE provision, which displays a fascinating entanglement of a multitude of actors, interests and issues as well as a surprising TNE profile of German cross-border education projects satisfying needs to date largely ignored by TNE-providers from other countries. Using the German example of TNE, we analyse specific structural factors as well as actor orientations leading to different modes of policy coordination, depending on national administrative and judicial factors rather than “only” on global parameters, which are traditionally identified as forceful drivers shaping the global sector of TNE.

## 2. Transnationalisation as national policy driven by markets forces

The generic term transnational education first emerged during the early 1990s (Knight 2010: 509) when Australian HEIs intensified their international activities for offshore and onshore students in the tertiary education sector. Hence, the concept of TNE was first derived from an empirical perspective “[...] to differentiate between international students recruited to Australian campuses and those who were studying for Australian degrees offshore” (Knight 2005: 5) whereas the differentiation between incoming and outgoing students dates back to older conceptualizations by higher education researchers. They intended to categorize the great amount of internationalization activities and cluster them into two different sets: home or campus-based internationalization as well as cross-border education (Ziguras and McBurnie 2015: 138 ff.). Transnationalisation can be regarded as a specification of the second category and is often synonymously described as “internationalization abroad” (Knight 2005: 5). However, it should be classified in conjunction with the meta-term globalisation, which is interpreted here “[...] as a geo-spatial process of growing inter-dependence and convergence, in which worldwide or pan-regional (for example European) spheres of action are enhanced” (Marginson and Wende 2009: 19). Regarding the emphasis on inter-dependence and convergence it is important to highlight the increasing competitiveness among the higher education sectors of nation states, which face an increasingly competitive global environment in the broader field of knowledge production as a source of economic success and growth of each country.<sup>3</sup>

The definition of the term TNE itself is a complicated and disputed one, often reflecting the nature of the national higher education systems transferring them abroad<sup>4</sup>. One effort to integrate the majority of all known TNE-types has been made by the British Council and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), two agencies central to the TNE field in Europe. This collaboration attempt to address the lack of usable TNE-data, which is the result of the existence of a multitude of definitions and terms used to classify the different actions of the sending countries and of a lack of a standardised data collection on part of both sending as well as receiving countries regarding TNE-institutions (Knight and McNamara 2017: 16). In order to better compare various TNE-sectors, the British Council and the DAAD have facilitated the establishment of a working definition and conceptualization of various TNE-types over the last years, looking on both the role of host higher education sectors as well as the form of the TNE output of various TNE-exporting countries. Although this paper looks at TNE from a German (sending) perspective, we have chosen to use the generic definition used to describe the broad range of projects subsumed under the term TNE. We apply therefore the more generalised definition of both agencies, which defines TNE as “the mobility of higher education programmes and institutions/providers across international borders”. (Knight and McNamara 2017: 2).

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion on the nature and relationship of inter-dependence and convergence in the field of higher education, see Dobbins and Knill 2016 and Knight 2010.

<sup>4</sup> A detailed discussion on the difficulty to define TNE can be found at Knight and McNamara 2017: An attempt by the British Council and the German Academic Exchange Service to define TNE on a global scale, bridging differences in national higher education traditions, especially among the main TNE-exporting countries.

The most important and basic differentiation of TNE-projects refers to the question of partners of foreign sending HEIs. Most TNB-projects originating in Australia, UK and the USA can be subsumed under the category of independent TNE provision (Ziguras and McBurnie 2015: 129ff.), while most German TNE-projects fall into the category of collaborative TNE.

*Table 1*

<b>Independent TNE provision</b>  The foreign sending HEI/provider is primarily responsible for the design, delivery and external quality assurance of their academic programmes and qualifications being offered in another country.	<b>Collaborative TNE provision</b>  Foreign sending HEI/provider and host country HEI/provider work together on the design, delivery and/or external quality assurance of the academic programmes.
<b>Franchise programmes</b>  <i>Commonly used terms:</i> import/export, validation, foreign, non-local, international private programmes	<b>Partnership programmes</b>  <i>Commonly used terms:</i> joint/double/multiple degrees, twinning programmes
<b>International branch campus</b>  <i>Commonly used terms:</i> satellite, private international, offshore campus, portal campus	<b>Joint university</b>  <i>Commonly used terms:</i> co-developed, bi-national, co-founded, multinational, joint ventures universities
<b>Self-study distance education</b>  <i>Commonly used terms:</i> fully online education, open university, MOOCs, pure distance education	<b>Distance education with local academic partner</b>  <i>Commonly used terms:</i> online or distance education with reference to local academic partner

Source: Knight and McNamara 2017: 16

As helpful as the proposed classification is in distinguishing various types of TNE, a defining analysis of the role the various nation states play in facilitating, financing or even initiating TNE-projects is conspicuously missing from the latest attempt at consolidating the global TNE scene. Higher education research has mostly been looking at nation states being drivers of international competition of higher education sectors through liberalisation policies, either allowing domestic universities to invest into TNE-projects, as it is the case in the US or even re-structuring their own higher education sectors in ways which produce an environment advantageous for the set-up of new TNE-projects (Wildavsky 2010; Ziguras and McBurnie 2015: 129 ff.), a process which is often referred to as “academic capitalism”<sup>5</sup>. Policy makers in Great Britain and Australia have early realised the potential of TNE-projects for profit generation, either for the individual higher education institution or even their own higher-education sectors as a whole. While policy makers on the national level originating in the three above-mentioned countries have been promoting the development of TNE, their TNE-policies seems to be largely limited to measures of liberalization and strengthening those academic structures within the

<sup>5</sup> For a broader discussion on the topic of academic capitalism, which made TNE projects on a large scale possible, see Slaughter and Rhoades 2009 and Münch 2014.

higher education sectors, which are needed to enable individual universities to invest into TNE-projects (Ziguras and McBurnie 2015: 130).

Against this backdrop and in order to describe the peculiar nature of the German TNE, we would like to propose a different model of TNE-production, where nation-state actors not only de-regulate the higher education sector in order to create academically more endeavouring universities, but act or regulate using strategic planning and instruments of financial support to induce and to promote TNE-projects abroad. By strategising and financially supporting the growth of TNE, a number of nation state actors assign to TNE not only aims grounded in higher education itself or more specifically objectives grounded in the internationalization of their higher education sectors, but have attached to the build-up of TNE-projects various other “higher” objectives from the field of foreign, culture, developmental and even natural resource policy (BMBF 2016; BMWi 2011). To explain this multitude of objectives connected to the establishment of TNE-projects, the development of the German TNE-sector has to be scrutinized at a more detailed level:

The development of German TNE has gone through a number of phases since the first transnational institution, a German-language department of engineering, has been established at the University of Sofia in 1991 with the financial support of the German Federal Foreign Office (DAAD 2012). Following the analysis of a number of policy papers, speeches by officials of various ministries connected to the establishment of TNE-projects and by the analysis of interviews conducted with representatives from various German ministries and implementation agencies, a number of phases of TNE-production can be identified:

First successful TNE-projects were established shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In 1990, the first TNE-project, the Faculty of German Engineering Education and Industrial Management at the Technical University of Sofia was established in Bulgaria. This institute was financed through funds of the Federal Foreign Office (DAAD 2012a). In 1993, the DAAD continued the support of TNE-projects by subsidizing a variety of study programs teaching in German under the funding framework of German-speaking Study Programmes. They were established in Central- and Eastern European Countries, as well as in countries of the former Soviet Union (DAAD 2016b). Those German-speaking study programs followed partially a classical pattern of German foreign policy, called “Foreign Cultural Policy”<sup>6</sup>. This policy field represents the third pillar of Germany’s foreign policy, besides diplomacy and foreign economic policies. The term itself goes back to the formative years of the Federal Foreign Office, but has been used in its current form starting in the 1970s (Maaß 2009: 25ff.). It aims at creating “[...] trust [between different states] through international exchange [...] by creating interpersonal trust between scientists participating in exchange and cooperation and who knew and appreciated each other for years”

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion regarding the issue of Foreign Cultural Policy, see Maaß 2015.



(quoted and translated from Schütte 2015: 139 - 140). In a more internationalised context this term could be described with the internationally more frequently used term “Science Diplomacy”.<sup>7</sup>

A fundamental paradigm change occurred, when the Federal Ministry of Education and Research initialized in 2001 a federal programme, called “Study Programs of German Higher Education Abroad”. The German Government allocated funds to the DAAD through the German Ministry for Education and Research, which were generated by the sale of German telecommunication frequencies in the year 2000 (Lanzendorf 2016: 213). The federal funding scheme could be seen in contrast to the first TNE-projects, such as the above-mentioned German-language department in Sofia, various study programs in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, which were aiming to strengthen the German language in countries of the former Eastern Bloc. In addition, the Chinese-German Institute for Professional Education and the Chinese-German College for Post-Graduate Studies were founded in 1994 and 1998 respectively at China’s Tongji-University with financial support of the Federal Foreign Office (DAAD n.d.)<sup>8</sup>. The newly founded programme transformed TNE from a relatively small instrument of foreign (and) cultural policy into an instrument of internationalisation of the higher education sector. It answered the urgent needs of internationalised education, which in the case of Germany can be seen primarily a result of the Bologna Process. The process of harmonisation of the study degrees in the European higher education area indicates, that higher education was now taking place not only on a national level but was becoming an international if not global endeavour. This landmark funding scheme was renamed “Transnational Education – study programs by German universities abroad” in 2004 (Lanzendorf 2016: 212) which attends to the increased activities in the field and is – as for Germany – accompanied by the above mentioned “politicisation” which reveals itself as a dynamic including all those actors which possibly have a stake in TNE.

In order to understand how the German TNE-sector has evolved over time, the following table provides an insight into the developed TNE-provisions within time period until 2017, excluding the smaller collaborative study programmes, which were funded in the above-mentioned federal program, as well as German language study programmes.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the term “Science Diplomacy, see Schreitetter and Flink 2010 and Fähnrich 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Both programmes were set-up with financial support of the Federal Foreign Office. The Chinese-German Institute for Professional Education was supported for an extended period of time under Germany’s technical cooperation, which is part of Germany’s development engagement (DAAD n.d.)

<sup>9</sup> In addition to German-language study programs, the DAAD has funded under the umbrella of the “Study Programmes of German Higher Education Abroad” until 2016 individual study programmes in over 30 countries with more than 20.000 students per year (DAAD n.d.b.).

Table 1: Overview of German TNE-provisions (year of first student intake)

(a)

German Universities	Orientation
<i>Andrássy University (2002)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg (2002)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>TU Munich Asia (2002)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>German-Jordanian University (2005)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>German-Kazakh University (1999)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>German-Mongolian Institute for Resources and Technology (2013)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>German University Cairo (2003)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>German University of Technology in Oman (2007)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>International University Liaison Indonesia (2015)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>Swiss-German University* (2001)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>TU Berlin – Campus El Gouna (2012)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>Turkish-German University (2013)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Universidad Paraguayo Alemana (2014)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>Vietnamese-German University (2008)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>

\* TNB-Project was dissolved or is not supported by German partner institutions

(b)

German Institutes und Departments abroad	Orientation
<i>Chinese-German College for Applied Sciences (2004)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Chinese-German College for Post-graduate Studies (1998)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Chinese-German Institute for Professional Education (1994)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Chinese-German Technical Institute Qingdao (2001)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>German-Columbian Peace-Institute (2017)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Faculty of German Engineering Education and Industrial Management, Sofia (1991)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>German UAE College of Logistics Abu Dhabi (2011)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>German Russian Institute of Advanced Technologies (2014)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>German School of Music Weimar (2005)*</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>Heidelberg Center Latin America (2002)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>
<i>Pan-African University – Institute of Water and Energy Sciences (2014)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Shanghai-Hamburg College (1998)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>

<sup>10</sup> “Top-down” or “bottom-up” refers to whether TNE is seen as a bottom-up activity or as a top-down activity. The orientation indicates, how the political planning and implementation was first realized. For an understanding of German involvement in TNE, it is important that both types of implementation coexist and are framed by state regulations to a different degree.

<b>German Institutes und Departments abroad</b>	<b>Orientation</b>
<i>Thai-German Graduate School of Engineering (2001)</i>	<i>Bottom-Up</i>

*\* TNB-Project was dissolved or is not supported by German partner institutions*

(c)

<b>Centres of African Excellence</b>	<b>Orientation</b>
<i>Congolese-German Centre for Microfinance (2011)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>East and South African-German Centre for Educational Research (2016)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Ghanaian-German Centre for Development Studies (2009)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Namibian-German Centre for Logistics (2009)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>South African-German Centre for Development Research (2009)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>South African-German Centre for Transnational Criminal Justice (2008)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Tanzanian-German Centre for Eastern African Legal Studies (2008)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>East and South African-German Center for Educational Research (2015)</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>

(d)

<b>TNE-projects currently under planning or construction</b>	<b>Orientation</b>
<i>German-East African University of Applied Science</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>
<i>Université Tuniso-Allemande</i>	<i>Top-Down</i>

Source: Own compilation by Alexander Raev

The DAAD and the Ministry for Education and Research first seemed to buy into the general trend of seeing TNE as an investment which was expected to produce financially measurable profits, following the model of the pioneering countries in the field of TNE, Australia, UK and the USA. The renaming of the program in 2004 indicates however, that Germany as a whole had chosen to go a separate way both semantically as well as in real terms in its approach to TNE. Although larger TNE-programs under the auspices of the Foreign Ministry of Education and Research were originally launched with a strong focus on exporting educational operations to other countries, the aspect of TNE as a tradable good has been dropped and was quickly substituted for the more equitable semantics of cooperation on an equal footing, which translates into a strong focus on collaborative TNE-projects originating from the German higher education sector.

This cooperative model of TNE-production has its own characteristics, which have much less in common with either Australian or British provisions or funding models than might generally be assumed. The main distinctive element is that “national level incentives to foster German education export are justified as a central element of a German “globalisation mainstreaming” strategy in higher education” (ACA 2008: 65) while the needs of the partner countries are taken into consideration, with an element of negotiation involved, when choosing the nature and scope of TNE-projects during the

initiation phase of such TNE-projects. The combination of national level incentives and international negotiations of scope and nature of TNE-projects should be seen in comparison to other countries, where TNE planning processes take place mostly on the institutional level; for example, in the USA. American TNE operations are largely realised by the HEI sector itself, with rare exceptions, like the American University of Kabul, which has received substantial funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID 2016) reflecting an approach comparable to the German model of TNE. In the UK, there is evidence for some limited influence from the political level: arrangements for a national campaign have created binding guidelines that include little governmental support, and only in select areas. However, financial pressure and declining public support have put pressure on universities in the UK to look for new sources of revenue keeping them able to keep up the quality of teaching and research<sup>11</sup>.

In Germany, TNE projects are often seen as ideal training grounds for individual universities to gain experience in managing international students, which, once established abroad, could be transferred to the home universities, increasing the quality of internationalisation measures at home. Hence, the establishment of TNE was very early on understood as part of the broader internationalisation efforts the German government had envisaged for German universities in general. Student care, but as well issues of curriculum development and integration of students into the workforce were among the issues policy makers voiced, could be enhanced in Germany by learning from experience made through establishing TNE projects abroad.

Following the establishment of the “Transnational Education – study programs by German universities abroad” a number of ambitious large-scale TNE projects in the form of highly visible bi-national universities in countries like Jordan, Vietnam and Turkey were envisioned and implemented. In difference to the branch campuses of the Anglo-Saxon higher education sphere, larger German TNE-projects frequently include bi-national agreements between the German government and governments of the host countries and are developed in cooperation between German ministries and ministries in the partner countries, reflecting usually a demand for specific forms of TNE from the partner government which has its basis in the general good reputation of the German higher education sector as a whole, rather than on the reputation of individual German universities.

### **3. Theoretical background**

To analyse the way in which decisions regarding the German TNE-sector have been made in the last 15 to 20 years, a theoretical framework is needed. The approach of the Actor Centred Institutionalism (ACI) developed by Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf in the mid 1990ies (Mayntz and Scharpf 1995, Scharpf 1997, 2000) provides for our paper analytical tools helpful to reconstruct the conflicting forces and interests by different actors within the German TNE-sector. In order to understand the evolution of the German TNE sector, the specific actor constellation as well as specific actor orientations within specific

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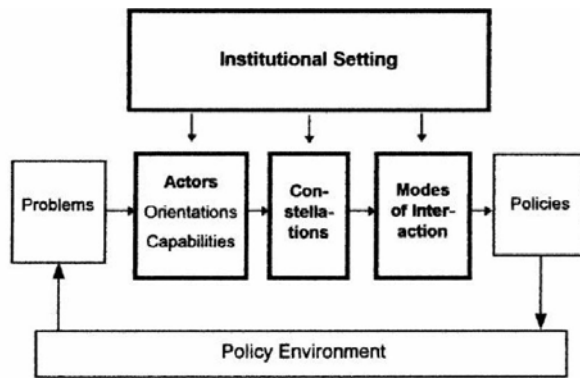
<sup>11</sup> For a discussion on “the scale and scope of UK higher education transnational education“, see UK Higher Education International Unit 2016 (Siora et. al. 2016), for issues of quality management see Ziguras and McBurnie 2015: 138 ff.).

constellations have to be taken into consideration. Using the ACI-approach gives us the necessary means to analyse individual actor orientations rather than focus too much on global framework conditions of TNE. However, the explanation of different approaches to and different outcome of TNE-projects can be developed by analysing institutional settings and policy environments at the national level (Scharpf 1997: 44). In order to explain the evolution of the German TNE sector, actor constellations, including actor orientations and capabilities will be taken into consideration. Especially the different actor orientations will be of interest to explain specific TNE outcomes. They include perceptions of the policy environment both within and outside of individual nation states, as well as policy preferences regarding certain policy problems (Scharpf: 1997: 43) to national state actors like policy making ministries and their so called intermediary organisation in the German TNE sector. Actor orientations can be identified through the analysis of official publications of the relevant actors as well as through expert interviews with members of these organisations.

Using the ACI-approach helps to address coordination problems regarding science and education policies in multi-level governance systems such as the German one, as posed by Uwe Schimank and Arthur Benz (Benz 2009; Schimank 2006: 283) whereby various actors on different levels both within the German governmental system and from outside have an impact on the outcome of the German TNE-sector.

The ACI is based on the assumption that social phenomena should be explained as outcomes of intentional interactions among different actors. According to the ACI, actors are mainly driven to maximise their interest within defined institutional settings. Therefore, the actors' intentional behaviour is structured or formed by the institutional context in which they take place. The ACI defines the institutional setting as a set or system of rules where the intentional acting of actors is framed or encouraged without sets of normative rules in which the interactions of actors is manifested. In the policy-making process different actors (private, complex, composite) are involved and are part of a complex actor constellation where different modes of interactions among actors can be distinguished. Modes of interaction, which Scharpf identifies, can be described as unilateral action, negotiated agreements, majority votes or hierarchical direction (Scharpf 1997: 47).

Figure 1



Source: Scharpf 1997: 44

For the analysis of the politicisation of German TNE in its entirety, going beyond bi-national universities, encompassing all types of German TNE, the analysis shall be focused primarily on what Scharpf calls the actor orientation (Scharpf 2000: 60 ff.). Actor orientations try to uncover the intentions collective rational actors have regarding political activities (ibid.) beyond the personal idiosyncrasies of the individuals working within those collective actors (Scharpf 2000: 61). As subjective actor orientations of collective actors and the people working within them can often not be directly observed, information on institutional settings can be used to identify clues regarding the individual actor orientations on the level of government organisations (Scharpf 2000: 61). Actor orientation is composed of units of reference, relating to the institutional contexts of different government actors (Scharpf 2000: 35), of action resources (Scharpf 2000: 11) actors have at their disposal, of cognitive orientations (Scharpf 2000: 60) and political preferences (ibid.) of collective actors. Cognitive orientations describe the way collective actors see and understand their world, assuming that even though facts “will be empirically correct” (Scharpf 2000: 62), their perception of the outside world will be shaped by particular institutional settings which the researcher can access rather easily through public documentation (Scharpf 2000: 62). Political preference can be disaggregated into three different modules: Basic self-interest relates among other things to questions of institutional preservation, autonomy and growth. Normative role orientations often pertain to organisational goals in more abstract terms (Scharpf 2000: 64 – 65), like the general functions of government organisations like ministries. Identities describe idiosyncratic interests, preferences and courses of actions of individual collective actors, sometimes called “corporate culture” or “corporate identities” which might contradict the more objective self-interest and externally imposed norms (Scharpf 2000: 65) and even lead to self-destructive or seemingly irrational courses of action.

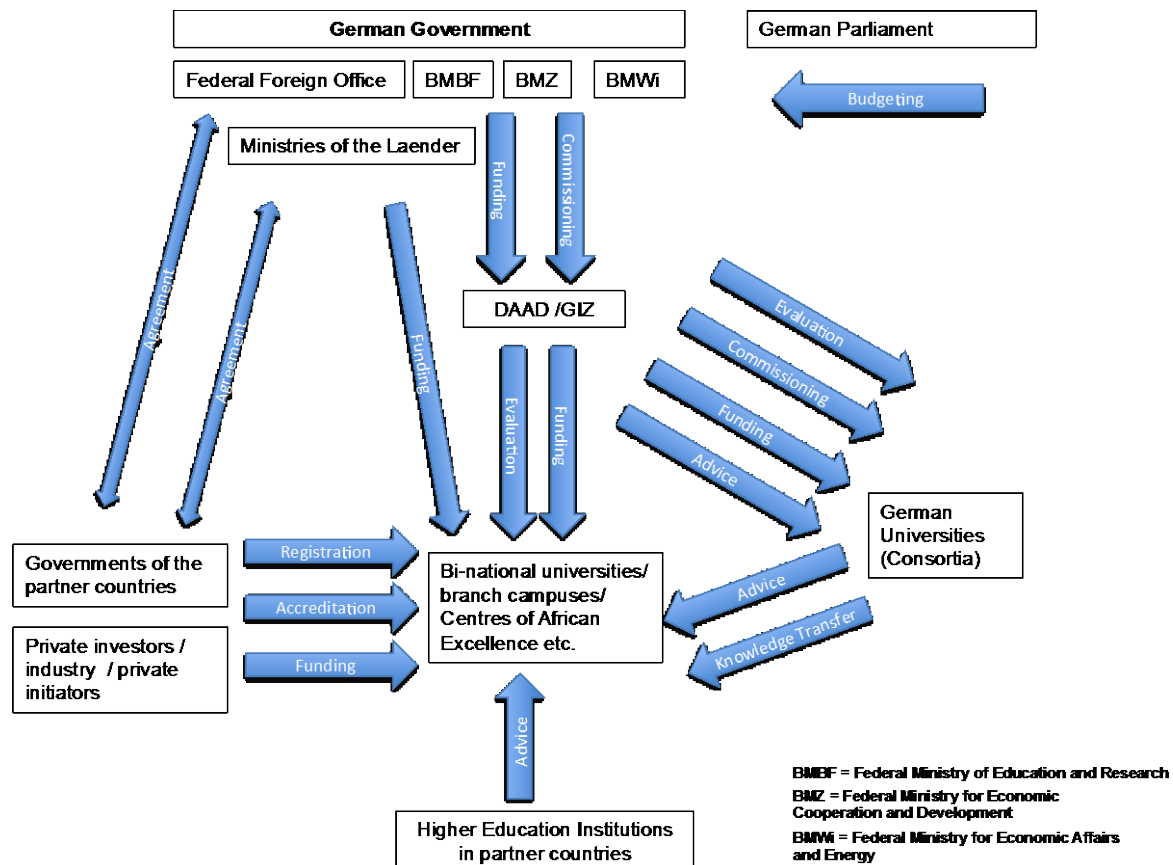
## 4. Results and Discussion

### a. Governance Structure of the German TNE-field

German TNE activities are regulated by a number of state and quasi-state actors, namely federal ministries (Federal Ministry of Education and Research; Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development; Foreign Office as well as the Ministries of the Laender) as well as their so called intermediary and implementation agencies, like the DAAD and the German International Cooperation (GIZ) which are implementing most of Germany's TNE projects on behalf of the financing ministries.

Figure 2 shows the governance-system within which the larger TNE-projects of the last years have been planned, initiated and implemented.

Figure 2



Source: Own compilation by Alexander Raev based on document analysis and expert interviews

The governance structure of the German TNE-sector seems to indicate a high degree of hierarchical planning by the Federal ministries, which leads us to the use of a top-down-perspective with the ministries at the top of the hierarchical planning process. Interview statements show however that the various ministries supporting the establishment of TNE-projects are highly dependent on the expertise

of the DAAD, one of the world's largest academic exchange organisations<sup>12</sup>. The DAAD has an in-depth and longstanding wealth of expertise for virtually all higher education sectors worldwide, by far surpassing the knowledge and expertise of German ministries in those fields. As such, the ministries transfer most of their authority to the agency, which indicates the influence of the DAAD as not only a powerful veto-player (Bach and Werner 2010), but also indeed something similar to a – if not officially commissioned – policy maker. Interview partners therefore emphasised the discursive nature of planning and implementation processes of new TNE-projects taking place between the DAAD<sup>13</sup> (and in a somewhat similar manner with the GIZ) and the relevant ministerial actors. A significant part of the input regarding operational opportunities and challenges in the partner countries seems to be voiced by the DAAD, structuring the policy process to a certain extent for the relevant ministries. Through both organisations, a high level of expertise both on the level of the TNE-target countries as well as on the level of operational procedures of establishing TNE-projects is guaranteed, allowing for an effective policy learning which is being made available to both the ministries funding TNE-projects as well as to the individual German university participating in TNE-projects.

An important factor, which specifies the German model, is the almost complete absence of a profit orientation by German (home) universities. Most universities in Germany are under the public and therefore non-for-profit domain, they are not free to invest and offer educational services to market conditions. Hence, the term academic capitalism (Slaughter and Rhoades 2009; Münch 2014) seems to be misleading for an explanation of the German TNE activities (Kreckel 2015: 72).

One key characteristic of the German involvement, which is a result of state regulation, pertains to the funding as well as budgeting of the German TNE projects. First of all, German financial support provides a seed funding, which is supposed to be replaced by forms of independent funding over time<sup>14</sup>. Up until now it is unclear, when and how the initial phases of TNE-funding from the German side for a number of the already established TNE-projects will run out, as the definition of “initial phase” seems to be an elastic concept. The DAAD has in the meantime set up a funding scheme called TNB-Step to be able to continue offering financial support to TNE-institutions, which had already been funded during their initial stages of existence (DAAD n.d.c.). Secondly, the German government has begun in the last years to fund and support diplomatically an increasing number of large-scale TNE-projects in a top-down fashion, planning and initiating TNE-projects, like bi-national universities or the above-mentioned Centres of African Excellence. This contains the frequent arrangement of bi-national agreements between Germany and its partner countries, including long-term financial commitments regarding the sustainable financial funding of large-scale TNE-projects. Germany usually covers only a fraction of the costs of setting up such projects, usually financing the curriculum development as well as the costs for flying faculty and limited scholarships, while most of the physical infrastructure, like real estate,

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion on the role and institutional form of the DAAD, see Maaß 2015.

<sup>13</sup> The initialisation of the federal programme, formerly known as “Study Programmes of German HEI Abroad”, originates from within the DAAD, according to representatives of the agency.

<sup>14</sup> Although the official statements proclaim that the state support system for those projects is limited in time, representatives of the involved universities disputed as a fact that the support will be rather necessary beyond the declared time frame.



physical buildings as well as the brunt of the running costs are being paid for from within the host country<sup>15</sup>. Interview partners voiced doubts whether the current funding schemes for German TNE-projects could be terminated without loss of quality of the education offered in those TNE-projects. The problem however seems to be postponed as most of the highly visible projects are still considered to be in the initial phases of their establishment.

Thirdly, the main funding and regulation responsibility for institutions of higher education in Germany lies generally within the responsibility of the Laender<sup>16</sup>. The German Laender are the main financial contributors of German HEIs and the main state actors responsible for regulating and supervising the academic sector as a whole (Kreckel 2015: 65), with the German central state being active mostly in areas of financing specific research activities among other support activities (Kreckel 2015: 66). The same logic of project-based financing schemes seems to be the basis of all state funded TNE-projects abroad as well. Although the rule prohibiting prolonged and institutional funding of HEIs by the federal government was finally lifted with the reform of article 91b of the German Basic Law in 2014 (Bundestag 2014), the new legal realities seemingly did not change the way TNE-projects abroad are being funded. The project nature of TNE-funding programs has until this day been upheld. There is not one TNE-institution that has been granted a prolonged institutional funding through the German government until this day.

Even though the Laender would have been the more logical actors to set up new German HEIs abroad, at least seen from a domestic higher education perspective, it was the federal government which allocated most of the German public funding used to support the establishment of TNE-projects abroad (DAAD and DZHW 2016). While a small number of German Laender was involved in supporting TNE-projects, like Hesse in the case of the Vietnamese-German University (Wissenschaft-Hessen.de n.d.). Due to the limited and project nature of the TNE support, the general prohibition for the central government to indefinitely and institutionally support HEIs seems to have been seen as unaffected. According to interview partners, the comparably high costs and lack of financial returns of TNE-projects compared to other forms of international cooperation the Laender are involved with, were seen as equally important for the silence of the Laender, as the Laender did not see themselves as being able to compete with the TNE-activities of the German government. Hence, TNE seemed to have been rather unattractive to the Laender and yielded no specific value for them, while having positive effects on the individual universities participating in TNE projects. Some of the interview partners attributed the reluctance of the Laender to question the current arrangements as a tacit support for the federal state's funding of TNE-activities of their HEIs. The contradiction of a long term need of support of HEIs abroad and the project-nature of TNE-funding schemes seems however still unresolved (Fromm and Ramin 2014).

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<sup>15</sup> As an example see a description of the financial agreements regarding the Turkish-German University (DAAD 2014).

<sup>16</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the development of the German (higher) educational federalism, see Kreckel 2015

## **b. Strategic framing and actor orientation of the German TNE-provisions**

It should be emphasised, that the German TNE-Sector is just one aspect of a larger governmental framework dedicated to the internationalisation of science and innovation, which also includes the higher education sector but has repercussions for research organisations both within the university sector and beyond (BMBF 2016). A number of sectoral and regional strategies have been published, significantly structuring the way government actors conceive the surrounding world - recognised as actor orientations - as well as containing the aims which are assigned to the establishment of TNE-projects - here understood as actor preferences. While a number of regional and sectoral strategies were vital for the steering of the TNE-sector, two specific strategies are central for the development of the German TNE sector, paving the way for an attempt at strategising the field in a comprehensive manner. The first major policy adjustment came in 2008 with the first internationalisation strategy of the German government, defining aims and instruments of internationalisation both within Germany and abroad. This strategy was drawn up under the direction of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. While the official document did not name TNE explicitly, international activities of German universities abroad were subsumed under the term “promotion of Germany as a location for studying, research and innovation” (Bundesregierung 2008). Incidentally this strategy was followed by a policy of the German Foreign Office in 2009, called Foreign Science Policy Initiative (Auswärtiges Amt 2013).

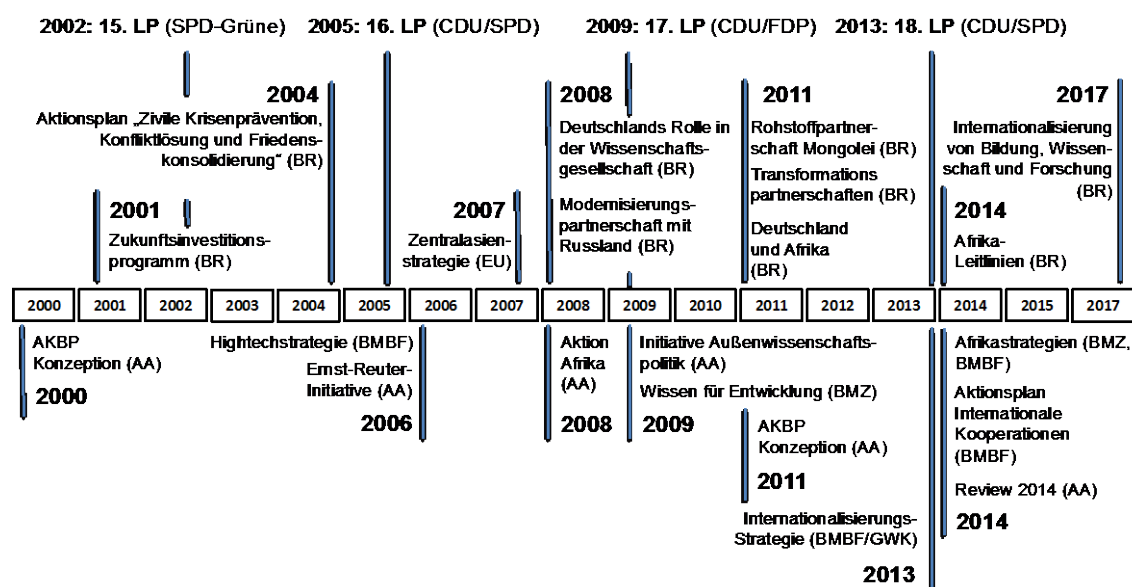
Both policies tried to define the way in which Germany was to commit itself to support and fund measures to increase the visibility and attractiveness of the German science and university sector as a whole. While the internationalisation strategy of 2008 aimed at combining a wide variety of single policy actions of the German higher education sector into a single policy approach, the Foreign Science Policy Initiative concentrated on the attractiveness of the German higher education sector as a whole to an audience abroad and focused at the same time on education as a tool of its foreign policy, described by interview partners as analogous to the term “science diplomacy”<sup>17</sup>. In a nutshell, these two all-encompassing strategies, represented by two different ministries, tried to combine (through TNE as a further policy instrument) objectives to strengthen the German higher education sector on a domestic level on the one hand and on the other hand to strengthen Germany’s science reputation abroad. While both strategies were mostly concerned with a general framework, that would have consequences for the establishment of German TNE abroad, a newly drafted follow-up strategy regarding the internationalisation of the German Higher Education and Science Sector (Bundesregierung 2016) includes TNE as a more prominent playing field, emphasising the increased importance of TNE in the eyes of the German government. The follow-up strategy implies re-directing strategic planning abilities in the sense of state regulation facing the challenges of an ever differentiating and still increasing policy field. This can be seen as an attempt at re-strategising and de-facto untangling of the politicised and highly complex field of German TNE. Whether the follow-up strategy gives the policy field a more coherent and less instrumental character, according to our definition of politicisation, remains to be seen.

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<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of the term “Science Diplomacy, see Schreitetter and Flink 2010 and Fähnrich 2013.

The fact that the second internationalisation strategy was published more than two years later than officially anticipated hints at potential major coordination obstacles between the two leading ministries, the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The fact that a whole chapter in this strategy is being dedicated to the issue of Foreign Science Policy (Bundesregierung 2016: 91 ff.), in difference to the first strategy, seems to corroborate that assumption. Both ministries, under leadership of different political parties, have vied for dominance over the field of TNE instead of sharing competencies and expertise for a higher purpose. Figure 3 contextualises the mentioned internationalisation strategy and Foreign Science Policy Initiative and illustrates further action plans, which also have had an effect on the provision of German TNE. This strategic framework has charged TNE-projects with a number of key objectives and aims, which help to explain both the target countries of the German TNE activities as well as their content.

Figure 3



Source: Own compilation by Alexander Raev based on a document analysis and expert interviews

Following this strategic framework, it becomes obvious that the German TNE moved further away from its earlier objective of internationalising the German higher education sector and widened its scope for objectives beyond the original policy field's aims. Judging by publications and activities, Africa has in the last couple of years become for the Foreign Federal Office an increasingly interesting region for placing TNE-projects, which, according to our interview partners, allows for an enhanced visibility of Germany's activities through an investment in TNE-projects (e. g. Sub-Saharan Africa). Eight so-called Centres of African Excellence, two more in planning, as well as a German-East-African University in the making, all financed by the Foreign Office, can be seen as proof that Africa has recently become a major place of interest for German TNE activities. Germany's engagement within the set-up of the large Pan-African University and a planned Tunisian-German University further emphasise the relative importance of the continent.

The German government published in 2004 a strategy, regarding “Civil Crisis Prevention, Conflict Solution and Peace Consolidation” (Bundesregierung 2004), where international higher education cooperation was mentioned as one possible policy instrument at the disposal of the German government. First direct effects in terms of new TNE-projects could be seen roughly half a decade later, when the first Centres of African Excellence were established. Their development was aimed at the one hand, as previously been hinted at, to provide the German higher education sector with an increased visibility in Sub-Saharan Africa in accordance to the Internationalisation and Foreign Science Policies, at the same time, the initiation of the Centres of African Excellence had the aim to “[...] get involved with their well-established structures and curricula“ [...] to act against the backdrop of Germany’s refugee policy and the rising need to battle the causes of migration [...]“ (African-Excellence n.d.).

Although the importance of (higher) education as an instrument to quell the reasons for forced migration and mass flight was already introduced in the strategy of 2004 (Bundesregierung 2004). The issue became an increasingly important driver of TNE policy-making in Africa and the Middle East after hundreds of thousands of refugees sought protection in Germany in 2015 (Daldrup 2016). These events were seen as a challenge where even German TNE-projects could step in, as they are seen as having the potential to play a role in preventing mass flight through a German engagement in those countries vulnerable. As a result, the Foreign Office and to a certain degree the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development were increasingly involved in looking for creative and new approaches to what is known in Germany as the Migration Crisis (Daldrup 2016), challenging both Germany’s domestic as well as foreign policy. Various TNE-projects in the Middle East, especially the bi-national universities in Egypt, Jordan and Turkey have since been supported through funds from the Federal Foreign Office to integrate refugees as regular students by means of German-sponsored scholarships in an attempt to create more stable and liveable conditions for refugees in countries of the Middle East (see for example GIZ n.d.). Another rather surprising turn to have an impact on the German TNE-sector was the combination of a German Resource Strategy (Bundesregierung 2010) in combination with a resource partnership with Mongolia (BMW 2011), which included a German bi-national university, the German Mongolian Institute for Resources and Technologies (GIZ 2016), funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. According to interview partners, the main aim of that TNE-project was the training of skilled labourers for the Mongolian labour market, which was at that time geared heavily toward the extraction of natural resources. A close connection between the university and the resource industries, among them a number of German firms, was to expedite the integration of successful students of that TNE-project into the booming resource sector. Issues of internationalisation or visibility seem to have been ranked only second after the support of the economic development of Mongolia.

### **c. National strategies as windows of opportunity for policy changes**

A significant policy change occurred, following the engagement of actors across the multi-level governance system, leading to an elaborated funding scheme as well as to the evolvement of a strategic

framework. This framework encompasses in addition to the original vision of internationalised (higher) education objectives from neighbouring policy fields. This results in an increased regulation by state and quasi-state actors alike and characterises the German TNE in contrast to other TNE sending countries.

In 2008, a policy of financing and supporting the establishment of TNE-projects, which were until then largely initiated by academic entrepreneurs from outside the German political sphere, was augmented by an increase of top-down projects by German ministries. Those top-down HEIs are usually bigger in size and scope than those previously supported and often stemmed from enquiries made by governments of the prospective partner countries with the German Government. Interview partners described the demand for those TNE-projects in part as a reflection of an increased interest in host country governments seeking to have specifically German TNE-projects established. This demand coincided with an increased policy interests by the German government looking for new instruments working with developing and transitioning countries. Interview partners stressed the high attractiveness of the German higher education sector, especially in the field of the natural sciences and engineering sciences as well as in terms of a high demand for applied and labour market relevant study programs by governments in partner countries. Higher education “made in Germany”, according to our interview partners, is recognised as being attractive especially in those countries, where academic sectors lacked the ability to support policies of labour market reforms. Therefore, the current high demand for German TNE seems not to stem from the wish to invest into academically strong HEIs (e.g. institutions, which rank highly in international reputation indices) but resulting from the demand for academic qualifications in sectors close to the domestic labour markets of these countries. In addition, the demand for German HEI seems to be mirroring Germany’s current status, which was seen by the interview partners, as one of the most successful national economies in the world and as one of the biggest exporting nations on a global scale, a success story, which partner countries seemed to wish to copy. In fact, German HEIs and their stakeholders require the relevant political actors to define a national code of practice, which sets common policy goals and directions. The initial results of these policy actions in the field of TNE resulted in a strategic framework, which has been included into the current internationalisation strategy of the German government (Bundesregierung 2016). Whether or not that framework will help to form a comprehensive TNE-strategy, streamlining the various TNE-projects and project types, remains to be seen. Without a comprehensible strategy and a better coordination of the various actors on the state level, an ever increasing number of TNE-project types is expected to be initiated, which threatens the visibility of the German TNE-sector, as foreign policy makers and prospective students alike might not be able to reconnect those various German TNE-projects to the successful model of “TNE-made in Germany”. Only with a strong academic brand supported by the German government, German TNE will be able to compete against the more visible TNE-endeavours, connected to existing higher education brands (e.g. leading universities) from Australia, the UK and the USA.

## 5. Conclusion

The scientific debate over the origin and development of a specialised field within the field of internationalisation of higher education, TNE has for too long been focused on issues of de-regulated higher education sectors and profit or reputation orientations as drivers of the expansion of TNE-projects on a global scale within globalised knowledge markets. In our paper, we analysed factors on the national level and the role (national) state actors play in supporting the set-up of TNE-business. Rather than focusing on the level of HEIs themselves, we have changed the focus onto the level of state and quasi-state actors in order to explain how the German TNE sector has evolved over a period of time (2001 – 2016). Within the paper, we use the Actor Centred Institutionalism (Mayntz and Scharpf 1995; Scharpf 1997, 2000) as a heuristic device with a strong focus on actor orientations and preferences. Our analysis refers to the specific governance structure, which implies the dominance of state and quasi-state actors. We were able to show, that German TNE-projects are supported by federal funds to fulfil various political objectives, which lay, at least partially, well beyond the classical functionalities of domestic higher education policies. Aims like the promotion of the German language and culture, the aim of stabilising partner countries in order to quell the reasons for forced migration and mass flight, or the representation of the German higher education sector as a whole, in combination with the increased internationalisation of the domestic higher education sphere have created a complex field of TNE-projects. Adding to the complexity is the fact that the German TNE-field is until this day evolving and has not yet stopped differentiating and changing according to political strategies and international demand for the provision of internationalised German Higher Education “made in Germany”. In terms of internationally comparative TNE-research, we propose to extend the perspective to the level of nation state actors extending the scientific discourse beyond arguments of mere (de)-regulation and quality management in order to explain various TNE-outcomes. Especially less well researched, non-the less significant TNE-exporting countries like France, China and Russia can be expected to have state actors influencing TNE-activities of public universities abroad, with aims going beyond profit or reputation generation, constituting what we would call “politicised” aims of TNE. Here an ACI-based analysis can be expected to bring added values to the discussion of the development of TNE-provision. A glance onto the national-level of TNE-decision making might open up a whole new perspective on the TNE-provision on a global level.

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