Higher Education in an Age of Disruption

Comparing European Internationalisation Policies

Anna P. Lohse
Higher Education in an Age of Disruption

“Anna Lohse’s book addresses two major societal challenges that European countries have faced in recent years, namely Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. The work thus unpacks an era of disruption in higher education. Anna Lohse not only applies the latest strand of literature on institutional change, but also combines historical and sociological institutionalism to enrich the institutionalist toolbox for studying disruption and its implications. This book is essential reading for scholars working on institutional change in educational systems, as well as for students, policymakers, and practitioners in higher education.”

—Lukas Graf, Professor, Swiss Federal University of Vocational Education and Training, Bern, Switzerland

“Anna Lohse’s book provides a topical and robust contribution to the literature on internationalisation of higher education. The study is based on substantial fieldwork in three major European higher education systems, highlighting a distinctive period of disruption and crisis. The combination of policy studies with historical and sociological institutionalism enables novel and compelling comparative insights about the dynamics of internationalisation. Finally, the book is exceptionally well-written, clear yet nuanced in its analysis and communication of complex issues.”

—Tore Bernt Sorensen, Lecturer in Education, University of Glasgow, UK

“Anna Lohse’s innovative book offers a vital understanding of institutional change in higher education amid contemporary disruptions. Compellingly blending historical and sociological institutionalism, Lohse examines Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on internationalisation policies in England, Germany, and France. Her innovative comparative framework integrates educational research with political science, providing important insights into strategic internationalisation as a national priority. Essential reading for academics, policymakers, and practitioners, this work illuminates the complexities of educational systems in a rapidly evolving global landscape, making it pivotal in higher education discourse.”

—Nadine Bernhard, Professor for Higher Education in the Context of Digital Transformation and Diversity, Technical University Berlin, Germany

“Anna Lohse’s timely book presents a detailed and enlightening analysis of the effects of two recent major crises on internationalisation policies in higher education in three European countries: France, Germany and the U.K. Using
Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic as examples, Lohse carefully traces patterns of institutional stability and change both on the policy level and within higher education. Her results provide us with important empirical knowledge of the impact of the two crises. Moreover, she also makes a wider conceptual point by demonstrating that despite a rhetoric of radical disruption there is only limited institutional change emerging from the crises. Thus, this book is a must-read for anyone interested in the internationalisation of higher education.”

—Jens Jungblut, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Oslo, Norway
Anna P. Lohse

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Comparing European Internationalisation Policies
To my parents for their encouragement and support in all things education—and beyond
Acknowledgements

It takes a village to raise a scholar and I have been fortunate to cross paths with many memorable individuals who have left their mark on my academic and personal trajectory. First and foremost, my gratitude goes to Lukas Graf. An exemplary advisor, he is the main reason why my doctoral journey was one of intellectual growth and personal fulfillment. Lukas always challenged me to reach new analytical heights, all while providing me the freedom to come into a researcher of my own and encouraging me to trust in my abilities. Having an advisor who is not only a prolific scholar, but also an ingenious educator as well as an engaging and constructive research group leader was nothing short of winning the grad school lottery. I deeply appreciate the beneficial working environment Lukas created and how generous he has been with his time and advice.

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My interest in higher education policy developed during the time I worked as a student assistant at the International Office of Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU Munich). I was lucky to have two exceptional supervisors, Jean Schleiss and Claudia Gebhard, who taught me about the intricacies of the Erasmus programme as well as the inner workings of higher education administration. I am grateful for the years I got to work with and learn from them, for their unwavering support and helpful advice well beyond my Munich years, and for Jean’s insightful comments on my Brexit chapter.
At LMU Munich, I serendipitously enrolled in courses by Elissa Pustka and Alexander Tschida, which ended up significantly impacting my academic trajectory. Prof. Pustka’s sociolinguistics class on *La liaison facultative* was an eye opener in many ways. It was my first introduction to the joys and occasional pains of empirical research, and the first time I realised that there were actual people behind the fascinating texts I was reading. Prof. Pustka was adamant in her encouragement that I, too, could become a producer of knowledge, and greatly supported me in my first attempts at empirical analyses and academic presentations. Dr. Tschida similarly impressed me with his dedication to the pedagogical craft. Working with him on the design of French-German translation practice modules was not only great fun; it also showed me how much the student experience is enriched by dedicated and creative individuals. Both Prof. Pustka and Dr. Tschida were terrific teachers and mentors that supported me in finding my own path—even when that path eventually took me outside of the realm of French linguistics. I am beyond grateful that I had the privilege of benefitting from their knowledge and counsel.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN  Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BA    Bachelor of Arts
BMBF  German Federal Ministry for Education and Research
CDEFI Conference of the Directors of French Engineering Schools
CDP   Committee of Directors of French Polytechnics
CEF   Centre for Studies in France
CGE   Conference of the French Grandes Écoles
CGT   French General Confédération of Labour
CIE   Comparative and International Education
CNRS  The French National Centre for Scientific Research
COIL  Collaborative Online International Learning
COMUE French Communities of Universities and Institutions
COVID-19 Coronavirus Disease
CTI   Accreditation Authority for French Professional Engineers
CVCP  Committee of French Vice Chancellors and Principals
DAAD  German Academic Exchange Service
DFG   German Research Foundation
DZHW  German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies
EAIE  European Association for International Education
ECSC  European Coal and Steel Community
ECTS European Credit Transfer System
EAE  European Economic Area
EEC  European Economic Community
EFTA European Free Trade Association
EHEA  European Higher Education Area
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<td>EHIC</td>
<td>European Health Insurance Card</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EUi</td>
<td>European Universities initiative</td>
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<td>FHEA</td>
<td>Further and Higher Education Act</td>
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<td>GATS</td>
<td>General Agreement on Trade in Services</td>
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<td>HCERES</td>
<td>High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>HEFC</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council</td>
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<td>HERA</td>
<td>Higher Education and Research Act</td>
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<td>HESA</td>
<td>Higher Education Statistics Agency</td>
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<td>HM</td>
<td>Her/His Majesty(’s)</td>
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<td>HRK</td>
<td>German University Presidents’ Conference</td>
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<td>IaH</td>
<td>Internationalisation at Home</td>
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<td>ICILS</td>
<td>International Computer and Information Literacy Study</td>
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<td>IDEX</td>
<td>French Excellence Initiative</td>
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<td>IMKD</td>
<td>International Mobility Cooperation through Digitalisation</td>
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<td>IP Digital</td>
<td>International Programme Digital</td>
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<td>IVAC</td>
<td>International Virtual Academic Collaboration</td>
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<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
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<td>MEAE</td>
<td>French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>MESRI</td>
<td>French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation</td>
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<td>MIOM</td>
<td>French Ministry of the Interieur and Overseas</td>
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<td>NAFSA</td>
<td>Association of International Educators</td>
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<td>NHS</td>
<td>National Health Service</td>
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<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
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<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
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<td>OMC</td>
<td>Open Method of Coordination</td>
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<td>PIA</td>
<td>French Investments for the Future programme</td>
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<td>PRES</td>
<td>French Centres for Research and Higher Education</td>
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<td>SARS-CoV-2</td>
<td>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2</td>
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<td>SEMP</td>
<td>Swiss-European Mobility Programme</td>
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<td>SIO</td>
<td>Senior Internationalisation Officer</td>
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<td>TNE</td>
<td>Transnational Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCAS</td>
<td>The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>UKIP</td>
<td>UK Independence Party</td>
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<td>UUK</td>
<td>Universities UK</td>
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<td>UUKI</td>
<td>Universities UK International</td>
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<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Recently, Europe has witnessed a veritable age of disruption. From the 2016 Brexit vote to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and from Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine to the ensuing energy crisis, various unprecedented events have left their mark on the institutions that traditionally guide societal behaviour according to new institutionalist theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Scott, 2008). National governments, industrial sectors, down to the most fundamental social unit of the family—all kinds of institutions found themselves reacting in one way or another to the upheavals: issuing opinions for or against Brexit, turning to the digital sphere amid the rampant COVID-19 pandemic, or revisiting energy consumption in an effort to reduce dependency on Russian gas supplies.\footnote{Higher education (HE), another key societal institution, has not been spared by this age of disruption either. Founded in the Middle Ages, Europe’s oldest universities have withstood many transformations including the rise of the nation state, two World Wars, the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the information technology revolution.}

One of the most recent and pervasive transformations has been the systematic expansion of the internationalisation of HE. A cross-cutting university process, HE internationalisation involves a wide range of activities, such as the integration of international perspectives into curricula and the training of intercultural competencies among students and staff.
its most prominent and most tangible feature, however, is generally understood to be international student mobility. Wandering students have existed since the early medieval days of the university (de Ridder-Symoens, 1992), but cross-border student mobility has experienced an unprecedented momentum since the turn of the millennium. While there were around 2 million internationally mobile degree-seeking students in the year 2000, this number more than doubled to 5.1 million in 2016 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023a).

Increasing cross-border student flows have been the by-product of facilitated travel and globalisation, but they have also been actively promoted by supranational and intergovernmental organisations, national governments, and the universities themselves. To the European Union (EU), student mobility represents a stepping stone towards building a multilingual, interculturally competent citizenry and the world’s most competitive knowledge economy (European Parliament, 2000). Over the past decades, the EU has promoted student mobility through major initiatives such as the Erasmus exchange programme (established in 1987) and the convergence of HE systems via the Bologna process (1999–). EU-wide freedom of movement and equal access to HE across the EU Member States have immensely facilitated both intra-European student exchanges and degree mobilities (Corbett, 2003; Johnson, 1999).

In an effort to strengthen their own respective HE sectors, national governments have devised HE internationalisation strategies, which combine political interests, short- and long-term economic concerns, as well as academic and cultural rationales (Knight, 2012). In these strategies, cross-border student mobility is frequently considered a vehicle towards more long-term strategic goals, including future international research and development collaboration, and the accumulation of human capital through international students’ subsequent permanent immigration to the host country (Crăciun, 2019; Matei & Iwinska, 2015). Strategic HE internationalisation activities in Europe are often steered by designated national agencies, such as the British Council, the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst [DAAD]), or Campus France. At the university level, the internationalisation of HE is similarly conducted on the basis of a range of academic and non-academic rationales, with the intensification of global HE market pressures having played a major role in the striking expansion of internationalisation activities over the past decades (Findlay et al., 2017). In part due to growing market pressures, university-level internationalisation has
undergone a remarkable degree of professionalisation, with internationalisation offices and university-wide internationalisation strategies now featuring among the ‘must-haves’ of university management (Marinoni, 2019). The proliferation of internationalisation strategies on supranational, national, and organisational levels of HE governance, along with the striking professionalisation of HE internationalisation management, underlines the extent to which the international dimension has become institutionalised in European HE systems over the past decades.

Against the backdrop of steadily increasing intra-European student mobility and decades of European HE integration, Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic represented two major disruptions to European HE. The Brexit vote sent shockwaves across the European continent as it constituted the first-ever withdrawal of a Member State from the EU. Many contemporary witnesses feared that Brexit would threaten European unity and worried it might signal the decline of the European project (e.g., BBC News, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Not only did the EU lament the loss of the UK as a European HE powerhouse characterised by a research-intensive and globally renowned university sector (Paul, 2016), but the unexpected Brexit vote also caused major uncertainties regarding the future conditions of student mobility between the UK and mainland Europe, with pivotal aspects such as EU-wide freedom of movement and equal access to HE as well as the UK’s continued participation in Erasmus suddenly at stake.

The coronavirus disease brought about the most severe global health crisis of contemporary times. In March 2020, amid exponentially rising infection rates and mounting death tolls, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). Subsequently globally introduced pandemic mitigation measures included stay-at-home orders and social distancing measures, as well as severe limits to international cross-border travel and in-person gatherings (Abideen et al., 2020). In many countries, education provision was shifted to the online sphere virtually overnight and remained disrupted for the unforeseeable future. As a result, global cross-border student mobility effectively came to a complete standstill for the first time in history, meaning that an annual average of 5 million internationally mobile degree-seeking students and 300,000 Erasmus mobilities were impacted (McCabe & Alexandrova, 2022; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023b).
In light of the unprecedented and disruptive nature of both Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, contemporary witnesses engaged in wide-ranging speculations regarding the transformative potential of the two events. Depending on the exact outcome of the divorce negotiations between the UK and the EU, Brexit “threaten[ed] to wreak havoc in many of Europe’s biggest sectors, throwing doubt on everything from fish supplies […] to student exchange programs” (Politico, 2017). It was further conjectured that as a result of Brexit, UK-EU relations would “never be the same again” (MacKenzie, 2019). Similarly broad speculations were issued regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Some projected that “the coronavirus will change our lives forever” (The Washington Post, 2020), and that HE would “never be the same again” (Witze, 2020). Some wondered whether the pandemic would “kick-start a new race” (Smith, 2020) for transnational online degree provision, while others called the pandemic the “internationalisation revolution that isn’t” (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Against the backdrop of these speculations, this book asks: How have Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic impacted HE internationalisation in different country contexts?

With the need for empirical evidence comes the question how to analyse the latter. The political science literature offers ways of exploring institutional stability and change, including potential watershed moments and the way they affect longstanding social arrangements. A particularly pertinent theoretical approach for this analytical endeavour is historical institutionalism. The latter assumes a diachronic perspective and operates from the fundamental assumption that ‘history matters’ (Mahoney, 2000) for public policymaking. That is, past choices guide and limit future choices through self-reinforcing mechanisms. These mechanisms can be based on, for instance, the costs associated with a departure from the trodden path, the perceived legitimacy and moral appropriateness of an institution, or powerful actors’ interest in safeguarding the status quo (David, 1985; Mahoney, 2000). In light of such self-reinforcing mechanisms, the traditional historical institutionalist literature assumes that institutions are generally marked by stability and a resistance to change. Still, per the historical institutionalist literature, there are two ways in which institutional change can nonetheless occur.

The first type of change involves an exogenous shock that unsettles existing path dependencies (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009). The shock-induced opening of a window of opportunity allows institutional change
agents to radically transform political policies, thus creating a critical juncture in the policy path (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Mahoney, 2001). The critical juncture concept has found great resonance in the study of disruptive events such as economic crises or natural disasters—but it nonetheless suffers from certain shortcomings. Most notably, it lacks a concrete operationalisation as well as a predictive element (Hogan & Doyle, 2007; Steinmo, 2008). Hence, critical junctures can only ever be properly judged from a historical perspective. This made it difficult to assess whether Brexit or COVID-19 could be classified as such while the disruptions were unfolding and in their immediate aftermath. The critical juncture concept also provides a somewhat reductionist account of institutional developments involving a stark bifurcation between long periods of stability and seemingly inactive institutional actors, which are then contrasted with brief moments of extreme and entirely fate-dependent outbursts of policy activity (Bell & Feng, 2021; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Cartwright, 2018).

In contrast, another strand of historical institutionalism focuses on actor-driven change and thus change coming from within an institution. According to the theory of gradual institutional change (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Streeck & Thelen, 2005), institutional actors can effect gradual transformations, for instance by layering new policies on top of existing ones. Over time, gradual institutional change can amount to large transformations as old policies are eroded from within the institution. The theory of gradual institutional change has been applied to a wide variety of empirical cases including the education domain (e.g., Graf [2013] on gradual institutional change in European vocational education and training policies). However, while the critical juncture overemphasises disruptive shocks, the theory of gradual institutional change marginalises disruptive events in the analytical process (Cartwright, 2018; Stark, 2018).

In light of the shortcomings of existing change theories, historical institutionalists have recently called for a more nuanced theorisation of the critical juncture and for a more relational take on exogenously and endogenously driven change (e.g., Bell & Feng, 2021; Hogan et al., 2022; Stark, 2018). The literature, however, provides little indication as to how such a revisitation of change theories could be conceptualised and concretely operationalised. Moreover, the historical institutionalist analytical toolbox remains underequipped to analyse institutional features
that go beyond regulative manifestations. That is, both the critical juncture concept and the theory of gradual institutional change mainly concern themselves with concrete policy changes. However, institutions also encompass ideational aspects since individuals are guided not only by coercive rules, but also by the institutional norms, cultural ideas, and cognitive scripts operating within an institution (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2008). HE features a particularly strong cultural element given that university governance and functions are closely connected to the legitimising myths of the respective nation states they serve (Ramirez, 2002; Stevens et al., 2008), and because HE produces social cohesion by transmitting shared cultural meanings (Meyer & Powell, 2020). Therefore, to fully grasp how Brexit and COVID-19 have affected HE, it is essential to go beyond HE policy as the sole institutional indicator, and to also investigate the disruptions’ potential impact on underlying norms and cultural ideas.

Taking into consideration the described gaps in the historical institutionalist literature, this book develops a novel analytical framework for the analysis of institutional change and stability during periods of disruption. To this end, it combines the diachronic perspective of historical institutionalism with the multidimensional conceptualisation of institutions as stipulated by sociological institutionalism. Scott’s (2008) three institutional dimensions offer a particularly productive heuristic for this analytical endeavour. They include, firstly, a regulative dimension, which consists of coercive rules issued by actors with the necessary authority to enforce compliance. The normative dimension explores institutionalised values and norms that determine what is considered legitimate action in any given context. The cultural-cognitive dimension includes taken-for-granted worldviews and cognitive frames through which meaning is made. In a first step, Scott’s three institutional dimensions are applied to the phenomenon of HE internationalisation, with a particular focus on student mobility as its core component. Through the application of Scott’s dimensions, concrete institutional indicators are developed relating to policies of international student HE access and immigration (regulative dimension); norms and standards frequently evoked by the HE profession as well funding programmes that incentivise certain HE internationalisation activities (normative dimension); and taken-for-granted national HE governance arrangements involving the state-market-academy triangle (Clark, 1983) and, connected to the latter, a distinction between collaborative vs competitive national
approaches to HE internationalisation (cultural-cognitive dimension). The book subsequently compares the disruption-antecedent institutional conditions with the institutional conditions during the age of disruption spanning the period between the years 2016 and 2021. Based on a comparison of disruption-antecedent conditions and disruption-induced patterns of stability and change across the regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive institutional dimensions, three competing disruption-related institutional trajectories are defined: (a) radical change, (b) partial change, or (c) stability. The (b) partial change scenario is further broken down into alternative path trajectories involving a potential path reinforcement in line with previous cultural-cognitive developments; a path clearing and resulting acceleration of previously concretely planned but languishing policy reforms; or path blocking, that is, the erection of policy impediments, which significantly slow down already planned policy change (Hogan et al., 2022).

To determine which type of (non-)change occurred in HE internationalisation in the context of the two disruptions, the study applies the newly developed analytical framework to three country cases including England, France, and Germany. This country selection is motivated by several factors. First, England, France, and Germany regularly rank among the top three European destination countries for international degree-seeking students while also representing popular Erasmus study destinations (e.g., DAAD & DZHW, 2017). Thus, COVID-19-related disruptions to international student mobility were particularly likely to occur in these country contexts. In terms of potential Brexit-related impacts, the three countries are also worthy of scholarly interest. England is chosen as the main UK country of interest. Not only do English universities make up the vast majority of the UK’s devolved HE sector, but different from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, where HE policy is decided in the respective devolved legislatures, the UK government also remains directly responsible for English HE. While England constitutes the focus of the country case study, developments in the HE internationalisation of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are also evoked to provide a full picture of developments in UK HE. The country choice of France and Germany is motivated by the fact that British-French and British-German student mobility flows have traditionally been among the strongest of all European countries (e.g., European Commission, 2017). In addition, England, France, and Germany have all participated in the Erasmus programme since its inauguration in 1987, making the Brexit decision
especially relevant to longstanding student mobility arrangements within the three national HE systems. Beyond the empirical relevance of the three countries, their choice is also theoretically motivated given that the English, French, and German HE systems each represent a different archetype of HE governance. That is, English HE represents a comparably market-based HE system, while French HE is rather state-dominated, and the German HE system follows a Humboldtian tradition that involves both the state and the academic community (Clark, 1983; Dobbins & Knill, 2017). The three countries’ different governance configurations make for a compelling comparison of the way disruption-antecedent institutional features shape disruption responses. For instance, the three-country comparison allows an analysis of how market- vs state-dominated HE systems interpreted and responded to Brexit and COVID-19, and sheds light on whether radical departures from longstanding governance arrangements occurred in the context of either of the two disruptions. This would be the case, for instance, if the empirical analysis established a (partial) de-marketisation of the English market-based HE system or the (partial) marketisation of the state-funded French and German HE systems, which traditionally followed a collaborative non-profit-oriented internationalisation approach.

The empirical analysis draws on qualitative data obtained through expert interviews and document analyses. 44 expert interviews were conducted via video call or telephone call between August 2020 and December 2021. They lasted, on average, 50 minutes and included Senior Internalisation Officers (SIOs as defined by Dessoff, 2010) working at English, French, and German universities; and policymakers employed at national education ministries and national internationalisation agencies. The experts can be considered “crystallisation points” (Meuser & Nagel, 2009: 2) for insider knowledge regarding their field of expertise and were purposively sampled based on their ability to not only report on the daily operations of student mobility at their respective organisation, but also convey knowledge of strategies, practices, and norms within the broader national HE sector. University-level experts were selected from medium-to large-size research universities, which are among the respective country’s key destinations for international students. Beyond university-level experts on HE internationalisation, expert interviews were also carried out with policymakers working at the national level of HE governance. Those were consulted for two reasons. First, while universities enjoy varying degrees of autonomy from the state in all three countries, and while
HE policy is a matter of the federal states in the case of Germany, HE is nonetheless considered to be a primarily national institution (Meyer et al., 2007). The topic of HE internationalisation frequently features on national policy agendas (Crâciun, 2019), with the state seeking to steer internationalisation activities, for instance, via national HE internationalisation strategies and national agencies for HE internationalisation. Second, both Brexit and COVID-19 were disruptions that were dealt with on the (supra-)national level. That is, Brexit negotiations, including those on the topic of HE policy, took place between the national government of the UK and the EU27, which included German and French delegates to the EU. The national level of governance was also prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially in the first months of 2020, the health crisis triggered various national-level policy responses, for instance pertaining to the closure of national borders. Only later on, a more local-level crisis response was adopted, with the UK, for instance, creating local restriction tiers and Germany increasingly shifting pandemic legislation to the federal states. Moreover, HE internationalisation policy is closely intertwined with national immigration policy (for instance regarding student visa regulations), and national immigration policies were key issues throughout both the Brexit and the COVID-19 disruption. Chapter 4 features the full list of interviews including interview dates and the expert interviewee’s organisational affiliation, as well as sample interview guides. Throughout the text, the interviews are referenced according to country (ENG for England, FR for France, and GER for Germany) with an additional number assigned according to the order in which interviews were conducted (e.g., ENG1 refers to the first interview conducted for the English case).

The document corpus includes 234 documents collected across the three country contexts. They were purposively sampled based on their ability to inform developments in HE internationalisation policy, and include governmental and organisational reports published in each country context. Moreover, due to the limited availability of secondary literature on Brexit- and COVID-19-related developments, the document corpus also features a wealth of news items and opinion pieces describing policy deliberations and different stakeholders’ reactions to unfolding events. The qualitative content analysis of the primary data followed steps of inductive and deductive category building by Meuser and Nagel (2009) and was conducted using MAXQDA, a software package for qualitative data analysis (VERBI Software, 2023).