Purposeful Internationalization:
Towards an Ethical Approach of Global Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Global pressures and disciplinary mechanisms have homogenized higher education institutions (HEIs) from different geopolitical contexts, which now try to imitate normalized notions and structures of higher education.

Internationalization strategies are becoming more pervasive in all substantive functions of HEIs. However, there seems to be a missing common thread that consciously aligns the diverse international activities at HEIs with the very essence of each institution's mission towards a greater common good.

To move research about higher education internationalization to a post-structural and post-critical approach, this study proposes a framework to study HEIs and their internationalization strategies as places where people assign meaning to their actions at a local, national and global level.

Building on an inhabited institutionalism approach, this framework could advance our understanding of how the glonacal environment, the institutions themselves, and the people within them, can create an internationalization approach that might challenge the mainstream construct of internationalization.

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BACKGROUND

- Higher education in general, and internationalization in particular, have intrinsic orientations towards the public good.
- Research has shown a misalignment between public and private goods within and across institutions and countries.

Higher Education Espoused Goals
- Institutional Strategies
- Mission Statements

HEI's caught in self-confrontation
- Utilitarian vs Moral approach
- System designed to encourage utilitarian to provide more; be better to do better.
- By focusing on their how's, Institutions might be forgetting their why's.
- Success (and comparisons) measured by abilities and performance, not by impact, worth, or mission.

Internationalization Goals
- Institutional Strategies
- Mission Statements

Unequal conditions between South-North
- Unequal partnerships, deficit perspective.
- "The exotic Other, the deficient Other, or the Other as commodity and revenue source" (Shultz, 2013, p. 84)
- Call for an ethical and inclusive approach to internationalization.
- Acknowledge the current global imaginary that has placed the West as the center and aspiration of development (Stein & Andreotti, 2017).

Anglo-American Model of Internationalization
- "Comprehensive" (Hudzik, 2011) or "Pervasive" (APLU, 2017)
- Greater focus on functions and delivery, less on purpose
  - Missing a common thread to align all the diverse international activities with the very essence of each institution's mission.

FRAMEWORK

"Glonacal" Agency Heuristic (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002)
- Three intersecting planes: global, national and local.
- They intersect and interact for both the organizational agencies in the internationalization process and the agency exercised by individuals or collectivities.
- Each plane has layers of embedded structures and current circumstances:
  - South-North inequalities, colonial ties, power disparities
- Being based on neo-institutionalism, it focuses more on **structure**.
- An approach that also considers **agency** could help to deconstruct foundational assumptions of previous research.

- **Inhabited institutionalism** approach:
  - How the glonacal environment, the organizations themselves and the people within them, can create an internationalization approach that might challenge the current global imaginary and the mainstream Anglo-American construct of internationalization.

- The power imbalance also represents a moral conflict.
- Each vertex represents an _**actor**_ in the internationalization process, they have _**intentions**_ that are **not neutral.**
- When those intentions are confronted, they engage in the space that is created among them: **"the _ethical space of engagement_"** (Ermine, 2007)
  - To what extent are HEI aligning their strategies with their higher purpose in an ethical manner _(conscious about the possibility of harming or enhancing the well-being of the other party),_ towards the common good?
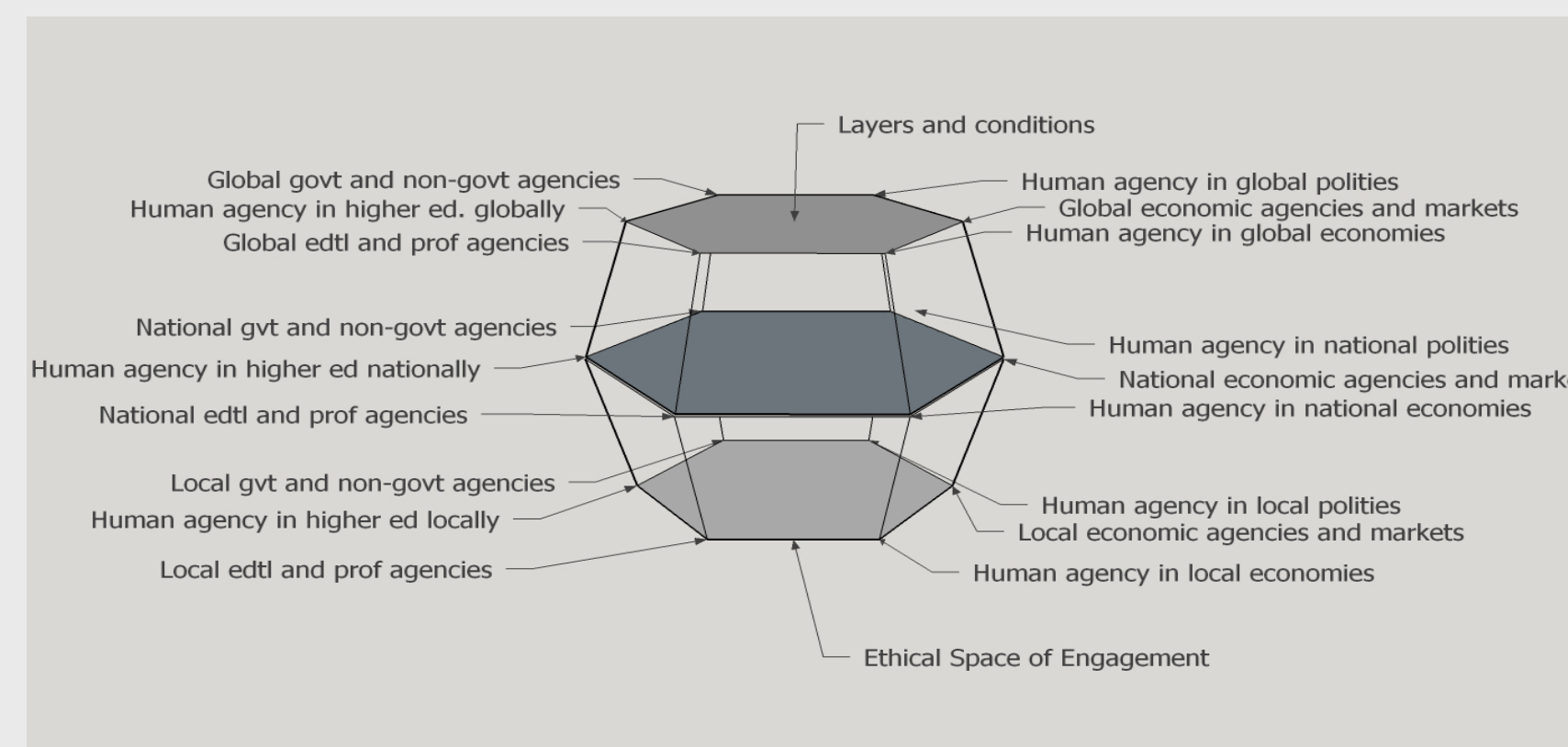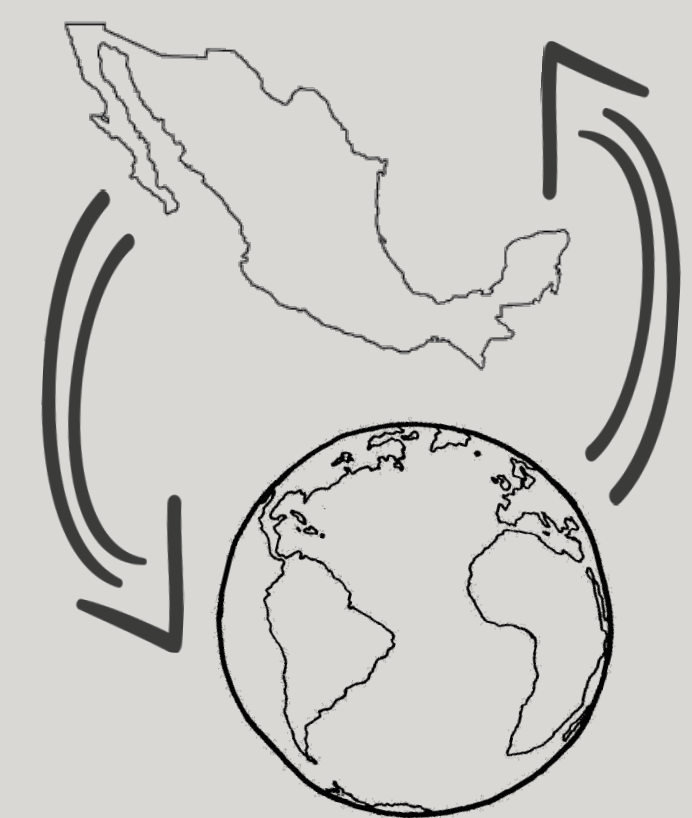
Purposeful Internationalization
- _Conscious alignment of an institution's mission and its internationalization strategy with the common thread of seeking a greater public good._

RESEARCH STUDY

Find alternative internationalization initiatives that contrast with the mainstream Anglo-American imaginary. These initiatives work in a context where internationalization is not necessarily a priority, thus, it faces an uphill battle for resources and legitimacy, but still, they manage to get implemented to the benefit of the institutions, the students and faculty inside them, and hopefully their larger communities

1. How do higher education institutions in Mexico enact their internationalization strategies in ways that differ from the mainstream Anglo-American model of institutions in the Global North? What patterns, if any, are similar?
   a. Transnational education strategies (physical presence abroad).
   b. Inbound and outbound international student mobility

IMPLICATIONS

- Observe the dynamics that occur when institutions establish partnerships abroad to enact their internationalization strategies.
- Gain a better understanding of the extent to which institutions in a country from the Global South can reframe their internationalization strategies in ways that defy the mainstream Anglo-American model of internationalization.
- Understand if and how "the goods" and "the public" in the public good aspiration of internationalization are different between the Global North and the Global South.

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