

# **The Perpetuation of Degree Ceremonies**

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This thesis was completed as part of the  
PhD Doctoral Programme in Educational Research

## **Declaration**

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

Signature .....

## **Abstract**

Despite being able to trace their heritage back over eight hundred years, degree ceremonies have been taken for granted in higher education which is evident when attempting to find previous studies about them, yet there are indications this may be changing. As significant numbers of new higher education institutions open around the world, and more institutional collaborative partnerships are forged, how degree ceremonies are prepared, maintained, and performed has become a matter of concern for those involved. At the moment, with few studies to draw from, organisers and leaders in institutions are having to resolve how they arrange degree ceremonies through previous experience, or by trial and error. Hence, the focus of this research is on how these remarkably resilient ceremonial occasions are assembled and perpetuated over time and particularly during a period of global growth in higher education.

Degree ceremonies are important to institutions not just because they provide a celebratory experience and rite of passage for graduating students, but also because as this study shows, they provide them with opportunities to publically display, and transmit their reputation, credentials and heritage to a wide range of stakeholders. This makes them fertile territory for research but contemporary studies have been rare. Those that have been produced emanate from the USA, and focus on challenges and effects large, lengthy ceremonies produce. Few studies have considered how these ceremonial occasions are assembled outside the UK, USA and Europe, or how material artefacts contribute to the construction of meaning and extension of ceremonies. Similarly, scant attention has been paid to extensive preparation and maintenance work that goes on behind the scenes often hidden from view to most.

Resting on a constructionist theory of knowledge, this inductive comparative case study draws on basic theoretical devices used in actor-network theory to foreground these matters. A variety of qualitative methods were used to collect data and a three stage analysis applied to examine degree ceremonies at four higher education institutions in the UK, one of which has collaborative institutional partnerships in the UK, and overseas.

The analysis provides insight into social and material actants involved in ceremonies, and how their relations with others intensify effects of institutional authority and hierarchy. Material actants are shown to be involved in the extension, stabilisation and adaptability of degree ceremonies over time and space. By making visible preparation and maintenance work that goes into degree ceremonies, this study highlights the culturally situated nature, fragility, dynamism, adaptability and vulnerability of these highly ordered events, which are so often viewed as consistent, fixed and stable.

There is evidence too of how degree ceremonies are being increasingly used by institutions for marketing purposes as they are drawn into a global competitive 'reputation race'. In this progressively competitive and fragmented global context the western model of degree ceremony being perpetuated helps to sustain and project a collective image of higher education. It does so by connecting higher education institutions with the rich heritage of the past, capturing the present, and alluding to future ceremonies to come. In doing so, degree ceremonies reinforce the heritage, authority and credentials of higher education as a sector, whilst at the same time provide individual institutions with opportunities and choices about how to build their own distinct institutional reputation.

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## Publications derived from work on the Doctoral Programme

- Wearden, S. (2015) How Academic Dress is Mobilised in Degree Ceremonies and to What Effect, *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, Vol. 15, pp. 14-29, (peer reviewed).
- Wearden, S. (2014) University of Lancaster Mace, *The Mace-Bearer*, pp.16-18, (Annual Magazine published by the Guild of Macebearers).

## List of Terms and Abbreviations

Actant	Actors in actor-network theory can be human, nonhuman and collectively all can be referred to as actants. The term actant used here to avoid human inference associated with the term actor.
Alumni (pl)	<i>Chiefly USA.</i> A graduate of a school, college etc. [C.17: from Latin nursing, pupil, foster-son, from <i>alere</i> to nourish].
Alumnus (masculine)	
Alumna (feminine)	
ANT	Actor-Network Theory: An approach to social theory and a research methodology, originating in the field of science studies.
a priori	Relating to or denoting reasoning or knowledge which proceeds from theoretical deduction rather than from observation or experience.
Commencement	Presentation of graduates to Senate and Academic Board wearing academic regalia in relation to academic award. Collins (1979) English dictionary 1. The beginning or start 2. U.S. a ceremony for the conferment of degrees
Confer	To grant or bestow (an honour, gift etc.) 1. To hold or take part in in a conference or consult together 2. Conferment (n) 3. From sixteenth century Latin <i>conferre</i> to gather together, compare, to bring together
Conventus	The ceremony known as ‘inception’ in the early medieval universities of Paris and Oxford was more commonly referred to as ‘conventus’ in the Italian studia.
Conventiō	An assembling, agreeing.
ERASMUS	European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students.
Ex-consuetudine	custom, customary

Graduand	<p><i>Chiefly Brit.</i> A person who is about to graduate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. From Medieval Latin <i>graduandus</i> gerundive of <i>graduārī</i> – to take a degree, from (to graduate)</li> </ol>
Graduate	<p>A person who has been awarded a first degree from a university or college.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>U.S.</i> a student who has completed a course of studies at a high school and received a diploma</li> <li>2. To receive or cause to receive a degree or diploma</li> <li>3. <i>Chiefly U.S.</i> To confer a degree or diploma, upon etc....</li> </ol>
Graduation	<p>The act of graduating or the state of being graduated.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The ceremony at which school or college degrees and diplomas are conferred</li> <li>2. Latin: <i>gradus</i> – a step</li> <li>3. Medieval Latin – <i>graduārī</i> – to take a degree, from (to graduate)</li> </ol>
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council, England.
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency.
Immutable mobile	In actor-network theory actants that can be interpreted in the same way in different contexts, something that is not context-dependent.
Inception	<p>Collins 1979 English Dictionary</p> <p>The beginning, as of a project or undertaking.</p>
Incept	<p>Collins 1979 English Dictionary</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brit. (formerly) to take a master’s or doctor’s degree at a university</li> <li>2. From Latin (C19) <i>inceptus</i> begun, attempted, from <i>incipere</i> to begin</li> </ol>
In situ	In the appropriate position.
Licentia docendi	A license to teach granted by the Head of a Cathedral School (11 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> century) (see Wieruszowski, 1966, p.20).
Magister	Latin term given to the Head of a Cathedral school who was mainly engaged in teaching (Wieruszowski, 1966, p.20). “Under the conditions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries which saw a general relaxation of rules and obligations, the archdeacon or even the <i>scholasticus</i> could pass the burden of holding schools to

subordinates, granting them a license to teach in his place. The fact that he remain responsible for the education of young priests in his area was clearly expressed in his right of conferring the *licentia docendi*, a right later challenged by the corporation of masters in the rising universities.

Mutable mobile	In actor-network theory actants capable of change or alteration.
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
Presentation	Presentation of graduates for the first time before Senate and Academic Board (see ‘commencement’ above).
Scholasticus	Latin term given to the Head of a Cathedral school mainly engaged in teaching.  “Under the conditions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries which saw a general relaxation of rules and obligations, the archdeacon or even the <i>scholasticus</i> could pass the burden of holding schools to subordinates, granting them a license to teach in his place. The fact that he remained responsible for the education of young priests in his area was clearly expressed in his right of conferring the <i>licentia docendi</i> , a right later challenged by the corporation of masters in the rising universities.” (Wieruszowski, 1966, p.20)
Sdn Bhd	Sendirian Berhad, a company that has been incorporated as a private limited company in Malaysia.
Symmetry	Generalised symmetry is used in actor-network theory to describe the equal treatment of human and nonhuman actors.
UMAP	University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
WTO	World Trade Organisation.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

Degree ceremonies are symbolic events widely associated with higher education. They incorporate diverse social actors, distinctive material artefacts, and ritualistic processes, some of which can be traced back to medieval universities in Europe. The purpose of this thesis is to study how these remarkably resilient ceremonial occasions are constructed and perpetuated at a time of significant global growth in higher education.

I focus on degree ceremonies held at four higher education institutions in the UK to examine how they are assembled, adapted and extended at a time of significant growth in the sector. One of these institutions has collaborative partnership arrangements with two others included in the sample and with two overseas institutions.

The emphasis throughout this study is on higher education institutions that host degree ceremonies, and those responsible for preparing and delivering a flawless and special event for their audiences, rather than the students. A degree ceremony is usually a once-in-a-lifetime event for students whose experiences are taken seriously and closely monitored by institutions; on the other hand, those involved in the delivery year after year are relatively neglected and their experiences receive less attention whether internally at an institutional level or externally.

### **1.1. A Changing Terrain in Higher Education**

As higher education continues to undergo a significant period of global growth, it has been suggested that degree ceremonies are also ‘remorselessly expanding’ (Thrift, Tickell, Woolgar & Rupp, 2014), although there is little empirical evidence about where or how degree ceremonies are being extended to and from, or what is involved.

Significant periods of growth are not new in higher education (Trow, 1973), but the current explosion in participation rates, and the entry of new types of higher education institutions around the world has been judged to be unprecedented in terms of its size, reach and complexity (Marginson, 2016). The reproduction of degree ceremonies over time suggests these events are resilient, having withstood significant changes, including periods of growth, in the past. This study looks at how they have been able to achieve this remarkable expansion and what role social actors and material artefacts play in the perpetuation of these ceremonial occasions.

Moving from elite to mass participation has impacted degree ceremonies in terms of their visibility. Once attended and observed by a few, now institutions are often finding themselves having to cater for increasing numbers of students, their supporters, and provide additional access for others online. The effect is to increase the overall exposure of these events which suggests they haven't lost their popularity. This is despite the wider context whereby high levels of participation has increased competition in the graduate jobs market (Brown, Hesketh and Williams, 2003), which has left many students feeling disenfranchised, as well as in debt.

As students travel more widely to attain higher education, and different types of public and private higher education institutions open around the world, those responsible for hosting and organising degree ceremonies are potentially having to cater for more diverse populations than they have done previously. How they are responding to such changes and the influence upon degree ceremonies is unclear.

This study aims to shed light on this currently under researched area.

Competition to secure students and funding has increased as more HE institutions open their doors. This competition has been heightened with the introduction and use of national and international rankings which encourages comparisons to be made

amongst these institutions. The interest here is whether there are signs of institutional stratification in the construction and perpetuation of degree ceremonies.

## **1.2. Why Degree Ceremonies?**

My decision to select degree ceremonies as potential sites for research was initially inspired by Johnson's (1992) cultural web. This framework recognises the powerful influence that cultural and political systems exert in institutions, and how these relate to inertia and processes of change. Amongst the various interrelated features of culture that Johnson suggests contribute to the 'way we do things around here' (p.30) are the rituals and routines of organisational cultures, which provided the inspiration to use the cultural ritual of degree ceremonies as an entry point for this study. Other reasons for selecting degree ceremonies included their familiarity, popularity and international presence. These ceremonies also include visible references to power and authority which are publicly represented through social and material actors. Finally, their resilience in withstanding changes is suggestive of their significance and also begs an explanation.

## **1.3. Conceptual Clarification and Terminology**

The term 'degree ceremonies' is used throughout this thesis to collectively capture graduation and presentation (commencement) ceremonies. In the former, graduation ceremonies, degrees are conferred during the course of a ceremony, in the latter, presentation ceremonies, students have already had their degrees conferred beforehand and are presented to members of the Senate and Academic Board as graduates. The change in status from a person about to receive a degree (graduand) to graduate therefore occurs at different times in graduation and presentation

ceremonies. The term ‘commencement’ is more commonly used to refer to presentation ceremonies in the USA.

Throughout this thesis, I also refer to degree ceremonies as rituals. Ceremonial rituals like degree ceremonies are different to many other daily practices (Manning, 2000). There is something distinct about them which Myerhoff (1984) captures as follows,

Ritual states enduring and underlying patterns, thus connecting past, present, and future, abrogating history and time.

(Myerhoff, B.G., 1984, p.152)

This makes them an interesting research site for this study which is concerned with the perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time. However, there is some dispute in the literature about how the terms ‘ceremony’ and ‘ritual’ are used. Both terms cause a great deal of confusion and disagreement regarding their use and meaning (Moore and Myerhoff, 1977). The problem seems to be that both words could feature anywhere on a continuum, where one extreme could be described as prescribed formality, and the other open spontaneity. Discussions about the looseness and interchangeability of these terms revolve in part around the meaning of formality wherever it occurs. Invested in these discussions are debates about the unquestionability of actions associated with formality and their links to systems of power and authority (Ibid). The theoretical framework employed here makes no such *a priori* prescriptions about formality but instead looks at how formality is constructed and interpreted in the field. Conceptually this provides the possibility of heterogeneous interpretations of formality and allows for material actors to be involved as well as social. This study thus subscribes to the interchangeable use of the terms ‘ritual’ and ‘ceremony’ which suggests that no *a priori* doctrinal distinctions have been made about formalism.

#### **1.4. The Paucity of Current Literature about Degree Ceremonies**

Despite opportunities that degree ceremonies offer as potential research sites for educational researchers, there are surprisingly few academic accounts about these ceremonial occasions, particularly contemporary ones (Davies, 2009).

Most recent studies about degree ceremonies have emanated from, and focused on, the USA. There are more studies to be found about ‘inception’ ceremonies where students were incorporated as Masters at medieval universities in Europe, although not a plethora (Price, 2005, Pedersen, 1998, Hackett, 1984, Wieruszowski, 1966, Rashdall, 1895). The emphasis throughout the literature has tended to be on ceremonies held at individual higher education institutions with a small number of studies focusing on ceremonies across multiple sites. Contemporary accounts of these events have provided little in-depth descriptions of material artefacts involved nor focused specifically on the material agency of these events. There are some notable exceptions though these too only tend to provide cursory examinations of preparation and maintenance work that goes on behind the scenes (Wilson, 1952, Magolda, 2003).

What little contemporary literature there is, indicates that significant growth and marketing are reflected and enacted through degree ceremonies in the USA and note the wearisome effects generated by large, lengthy ceremonies. Currently missing from the literature are specific empirical studies about how increasing global participation rates in recent years have impact on degree ceremonies outside the USA, or how the effects of marketing are being reflected and enacted through them.

With few accounts about how degree ceremonies are being assembled in contemporary contexts, organisers and leaders in higher education institutions are having to make decisions based on experience, or by trial and error. This study aims

to make a contribution to these gaps in the literature, and in doing so, provide a point of contact for leaders, administrators, and organisers tasked with delivering degree ceremonies.

### **1.5. Theoretical Framework of Inquiry**

The material as well as social artefacts involved in degree ceremonies are considered significant in this study. However, there are few theoretical devices available in educational research that accord material actors the same importance as social ones. In the past, materials in educational research settings were seen as ‘mere instruments’ to improve educational performance (Sørensen, 2009). This study seeks to explore the agency of material artefacts in degree ceremonies and how they relate with other actors in the construction of meaning and change. Such dynamic materialising processes between human and nonhuman in educational settings, hitherto largely overlooked (Fenwick, Edwards & Sawchuk, 2011), will be foregrounded here.

Two theoretical devices used in actor-network theory fit well with the approach outlined above. First is the principle of generalised symmetry, because it allows for the inclusion and agency of material actors in degree ceremonies alongside the social. Actors in actor-network theory can be human, nonhuman, or collectively all can be referred to as ‘actants’, which is how they will be referred to here. Actants have the capacity to act, transform and exert influence through interactions with other actants (Mützel, 2009). Secondly, actants can be immutable, mutable and mobile in actor-network theory which provides opportunities for observing those included in degree ceremonies and their dynamic materialising relations to consider how they are involved in the construction, meaning, change and perpetuation of ceremonies across time and space (Latour, 2005, Mol and de Laet, 2000). However, actants, especially material ones, require transporting, placing and ordering in different spaces and places

as degree ceremonies are extended. Therefore, this study also draws on Denis and Pontille (2010, 2011) to illuminate how actants are prepared and maintained before ceremonies.

Combining theoretical devices used in actor-network theory and drawing on descriptions of preparation and maintenance (Ibid) establishes a framework of inquiry that provides opportunities to explain the continuity and expansion of degree ceremonies, whilst at the same time revealing the mechanisms underlying their perpetuation.

### **1.6. Principal Questions and Aims**

Building on the arguments that have been outlined above, the following two research questions guided this research. The principal research question being asked in this thesis is,

- How are degree ceremonies perpetuated over time?

Exploring the perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time implies continuity, and gives the impression that they are fixed and unchanging. The framework of inquiry being employed views these as effects that are assembled, reproduced, and requiring explanation. Hence, this study examines what is being perpetuated at degree ceremonies in terms of social and material actors, and how they are perpetuated through preparation and maintenance work. However, degree ceremonies are not isolated from their environments. Previous studies have indicated that differences occur across institutions, and that significant periods of growth impact on the organisation and delivery of degree ceremonies. In order to capture how these factors vary according to different conditions a second sub-question asks,

- How are degree ceremonies perpetuated in relation to different conditions of growth in higher education?

In order to maintain focus within the framework of inquiry whilst addressing these questions in the field, and during the analysis, the following sub-questions were used:

- a. How are social and material actors involved?
- b. How does preparation and maintenance work contribute to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies in different conditions of growth?

Drawing on these sub-questions through the framework of inquiry, it is possible to follow specific actants involved in degree ceremonies across time and space, thus creating opportunities to look at the perpetuation of degree ceremonies across different institutions in different locations at different times (Latour, 2005, Mol and de Laet, 2000). However, actants are not always *in situ* and have to be moved, arranged and ordered to realise the effects they do (Denis & Pontille, 2010). By using the sub-questions above, I am able to focus attention on this work and the actors involved.

### **1.7. Methodological Approach**

Methodologically, this study is underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988) that rests on a constructionist theory of knowledge which views the development of jointly constructed meanings as constantly in the process of being made and re-made, and open to different interpretations. In this study, material actors as well as social actors are seen to be involved in the assemblage and re-assemblage of meaning.

Four UK-based higher education institutions are included in this inductive comparative case study. They include four public institutions: Rose University,

Hargreaves College, Rock College, and Colossus University<sup>1</sup>. Existing collaborative institutional partnership arrangements were in place between Rose University and the rest of the sample, excluding Colossus University. Rose University also had existing collaborative partnerships with two private institutions in Asia: Lotus Institute in India, and Hibiscus University in Malaysia. Limited access was gained to these overseas institutions through Rose University and therefore they are not included in the main sample but treated as subsidiary institutions in this study.

For each institution, documents and photographs were collected, along with DVDs of ceremonies held at Rose, Lotus and Hibiscus. Interviews were conducted at Rose and Colossus. Further resources were gathered, including correspondence provided by an established robemaker in relation to the provision of academical dress at Rose University, statistical data shared by the ceremonies office at Rose University, and national and international news items and field notes were kept throughout. More access was gained at Rose University, and as a result the accumulation of data there was more significant. ATLAS-ti was employed to manage and organise the large, complex data set that was obtained across the sample.

Data were analysed by following actants, and focused on specific points before, during and after ceremonies at individual institutions. Thick descriptions were produced which were used to trace the perpetuation of ceremonies, and how different conditions of growth were enacted through them.

However, the findings presented in this study represent only a partial view of degree ceremonies. Nevertheless, the large body of data and its in-depth analysis contributes

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<sup>1</sup> These institutions have been given pseudonyms

to exploring how degree ceremonies are perpetuated over time, and provides insight into how different conditions of growth are enacted through them.

Before proceeding, the structure of this thesis is summarised below.

## **1.8. Structure of Thesis**

There are two parts to the thesis. Part I includes three chapters which situate this study chronologically in its historical and contemporary higher education setting, before establishing a theoretical framework and methodological route for analysing the construction and perpetuation of degree ceremonies. Part I begins with Chapter Two, which asks about the geneses of degree ceremonies. This recognises the historical legacy of degree ceremonies, and looks specifically for ceremonial features apparent at medieval universities in Europe that have survived to the present day. The chapter then brings the focus back to contemporary higher education settings by reviewing contemporary literature about degree ceremonies, which draws attention to the impact that significant growth in student enrolments has had on degree ceremonies in the USA. However, with few studies taking into account recent increases in the international growth in higher education, Chapter Three focuses on different types of growth occurring at the time of this study and their potential to impact on degree ceremonies. This chapter closes by suggesting that increasing marketing activity in higher education has been partly driven by growth and highlights how degree ceremonies provide institutions with potential marketing opportunities as well as challenges. Chapter Four establishes a theoretical framework of inquiry and methodological route for analysing the construction and perpetuation of degree ceremonies.

Part II comprises four chapters, three that analyse how degree ceremonies are assembled and perpetuated in relation to the different types of growth and marketing in higher education discussed earlier, and a final concluding chapter. The first three chapters of Part II are designed to build on one another and each concludes with an overview that discusses and relates findings to points raised in Part I.

Part II begins with Chapter Five which focuses on how two material actants (ceremonial mace and academical dress) described earlier contribute to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies in relation to different conditions of growth, and whether they are involved in marketing activity, and documents are unearthed that shed light on a ceremonial mace at one of the institutions in this study. Chapter Six argues that actants can only achieve the effects they do as a result of how they are placed, ordered, and maintained during the preparation period before ceremonies. This chapter also seeks to demonstrate how this work in association with various actants at ceremonies has the capacity to stabilise them and produce effects such as hierarchy and authority. On occasion, preparation and maintenance work is also shown to highlight the vulnerability and fragility of ceremonial assemblages. Chapter Seven focuses on the performances of degree ceremonies and how institutional reputation and credentials are transmitted through them as well as what marketing activity is observed. It also draws attention to how maintenance work is ongoing throughout. This chapter closes by considering the consequences of making planned changes to degree ceremonies as cultural rituals.

Chapter Eight draws conclusions and discusses how this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge by responding to the research questions posed above, the gaps identified in the literature, and reflects on how the framework of inquiry worked in practice and

whether there are any practical implications arising from this study for those responsible for organising and delivering degree ceremonies.

# PART I

## **Chapter 2    What are Degree Ceremonies?**

The origins of degree ceremonies can be traced back over eight hundred years yet there has been few academic studies about them, particularly in contemporary contexts (Davies, 2009).

This chapter lays the foundations for this study by establishing the genesis of degree ceremonies to find out if any actors from this formative period have survived to the present day; the discussion foregrounds the role that material actors play in the perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time by highlighting how two material features in particular appear to have survived to the present day. The chapter then moves to contemporary contexts of degree ceremonies by reviewing recent academic accounts about them. The intention is to establish how, instead of focusing on the actors and their historical connections, contemporary accounts about degree ceremonies have drawn attention to the impact that significant growth has had on degree ceremonies in higher education in the USA. Reviewing existing literature about degree ceremonies also reveals how material features of these remarkably resilient occasions have tended to be overlooked. This chapter ends by highlighting the gaps in contemporary accounts of degree ceremonies and identifying where this study aims to contribute to existing knowledge about them.

### **2.1.    The Origins of Degree Ceremonies**

...in the conferment of University Degrees are preserved formulae as old as the University itself, and a ritual which, if understood, is full of meaning as to the oldest University history.

(Wells, J. 1906, p.3)

It is likely that some form of public ceremonial was in place in the earliest medieval universities in Europe in the late eleventh century, although evidence is sparse. The universities (*studia*) that emerged during this period were unlike the ones we take for granted today. They had few material trappings such as written examinations, set curricula, degrees, faculties, officials, academic buildings and libraries (Wieruszowski, 1966). Yet these early incarnations of universities and inception ceremonies did include material features, such as prescribed academical dress, which would have been similar to lay and clerical fashion of the time, and ceremonial mace which were used by the Church and monarchs at the time. Students were male, self-funded, or sponsored by patrons. They tended to come from wealthier backgrounds when compared to the general population living in Europe at the time. These students travelled across Europe to places where Masters congregated to share and discuss their knowledge. The places they gravitated to became recognised and more widely known. In this way the Universities of Bologna, Paris, and later Oxford, became established *ex consuetudine* (in custom) rather than founded by an external authority. This resurgence of interest in scholarship was driven not just by a thirst for knowledge, or a desire to teach; rather during the same period there was growing demand for highly qualified men to take up positions of service in the church, state and other civic bodies (Wieruszowski, 1966). The evident demand for higher learning in the late eleventh and early twelfth century may thus be linked to the future prospect of employment.

## **2.2. Inception Ceremonies at Medieval Universities in Europe**

It is difficult to find accounts from the eleventh and twelfth century about early ceremonies associated with students attaining a license to teach or being admitted to the corporate body of a university as a Master. There is circumstantial evidence to

suggest that some sort of custom or public ceremonial was already in place at some universities in the twelfth century (Wieruszowski, 1966, p.79, Rashdall, 1895, p.146, Price, 2005, p.2). However, it is only in 1215 that we have a direct account of a ceremony linked to the examination of a candidate at a university. The account comes from the Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Bologna, Boncampagno, who describes how he read one of his works in the presence of the professors of canon and civil law who had collectively assembled as one '*universitas*' (Wieruszowski, 1966, p.68). This account described part of the ceremony that would have been referred to as '*conventus*' in Italian universities at the time and was more commonly referred to as '*inception*' at other universities that held these ceremonies across Europe during the thirteenth century (Ibid).

Price (2005) notes a 'convergence of practices amongst universities' in relation to inception ceremonies at the time (p.4). He suggests they were designed to demonstrate the control exercised by a university's body of Masters over the right to grant the license to teach (*licentia docendi*) and judge the fitness of candidates for Mastership (Price, 2005, p.2). In many respects one might think this reflects the primary purpose of graduation ceremonies today. However, inception did not involve the conferral of degrees, instead it was a symbolic occasion that marked a candidate's right to join the corporate body of a university, as a Master alongside their peers (Ibid). This process not only served to reinforce and regulate the rights and privileges of members at universities, it also demonstrated to the outside world a university's right to self-determination (Price, 2005, p.2).

The process of inception which culminated in a ceremony required candidates to undertake a period of training under a master which included a period of study and a period of teaching. After this the candidate would communicate his intention to

become licensed. Masters would then be required to give an account about the worthiness of the candidate. If the candidate was deemed worthy and of good character, only then would they be permitted to participate in the examination to gain a license to teach. This would take place either in a closed setting with their superiors or a public setting open to all (Price, 2005, p.4-5).

Once a license had been granted the candidate could go on to the inception ceremony. There was often a gap between gaining a license and the inception ceremony. There were a variety of reasons for this, first, candidates had to ensure they had completed any unfinished business such as lectures and readings. Second, they had to acquire permission to take an oath of obedience before being able to proceed to the ceremony, (masters on occasion would hold up this process) and finally there was the issue of cost. Following the formal ritual of the inception ceremony the candidate was required to host a banquet for masters and some of his fellow scholars. These were often lavish affairs and extremely costly for students with limited means. The universities tried to regulate the extent of these festivities but were not always successful (Price, 2005, p. 7).

The inception ceremonies themselves required a newly licensed candidate to demonstrate his ability to perform the duties of a Master by taking part in disputations at Vespers. Usually on the morning after Vespers he would be expected to deliver an inaugural lecture in the presence of Masters and members of the administration of the university. An officer of the university called a 'bedel' carrying a mace would be present at such occasions (Price, 2005, p.6).

There were prescribed rules regarding dress at these ceremonies,

Each master attending the inception would be dressed in the academic costume worn by regent-masters at formal or 'ordinary' lectures and at all

official academic functions and ceremonies. This magisterial dress consisted of a full outer garment called a cappa, or cope, and a cap, either a biretta, a square cap with a tuft, or a pileum, a round cap. The regulation cope reached to the heels and was originally black and sleeveless; its border and hood of miniver were distinctive to the rank of master. Later, the material and colour would vary among faculties.

(Price, 2005, p.6)

During the ceremony, either before or after the inaugural lecture, the candidate would be presented with a number of symbolic items by the presiding master or chancellor in recognition of their new position. These included a book which was usually open, a cap placed on the candidate's head, and a gold ring placed on their finger.

The ring seems to have been a 'concrete manifestation' of either the scholar's equality with the Knight, or his 'espousal to science'.

(Price, 2005, p.27, no.41)

The inception ceremony would be brought to a close by the presiding master or chancellor who would confer the candidate's membership as a master on behalf of the community of masters and end with a benediction. The masters would then attend a banquet hosted by the new master which usually took place in a tavern.

Various features in Price's description of early inception ceremonies were also evident across the degree ceremonies in this study. These include: ceremonial mace, bedels, presiding officer [chancellor], prescribed academical dress, students, members of the academic community, and festivities following the ceremonies.

The historical associations of three of these actors, the ceremonial mace, bedels and academical dress, are briefly discussed below. These are selected because ceremonial

mace and bedels have hitherto been neglected in the literature. Academical dress, while having received more academic attention, is selected due to its widespread recognition and rich history making it a particularly useful actor to look at with regard to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies.

### **2.3. Ceremonial Mace**

Ancient mace heads found around the world which date back at least 5000 years<sup>2</sup> indicate that mace have been given as gifts and used for ceremonial purposes long before their use at inception ceremonies. Little is known about how they first came to be used in universities, although during the twelfth century when universities were establishing themselves in Europe, mace or *mazza* were carried before Popes and monarchs, and were also used as a popular weapon of war at the time. No longer deployed as weapons of war, mace are still in use around the world in universities, seats of government, and other civic bodies.

Whilst we know mace were used for ceremonial purposes at early medieval universities in Europe, it is likely they had other functions too. Medieval mace are still regularly used at universities in Europe today. The oldest mace found during this study were those being used during matriculation ceremonies at the University of Bologna, which reputedly date back to the fourteenth century (see fig. 1 below), and three medieval mace carried in degree ceremonies at the University of St. Andrews which date back to the fifteenth century (see fig. 2. below).

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<sup>2</sup> Narmer Macehead found in Egypt, c.31<sup>st</sup> century, Knowth Flint Macehead found in Ireland, (3300-2800 BC).



Fig. 1: Ceremonial mace from the University of Bologna reputed to be Fourteenth Century (Reproduced courtesy of the University of Bologna)

The medieval mace at Bologna and those at St. Andrews do not appear to resemble early English university mace which developed from military mace; rather, they have more ecclesiastical connections, which in pre-reformation times would have reflected and magnified the head of the universities [Rector's] position as a member of the church<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Account of the Maces of Scottish Universities, *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. xli. Pp. 370-373, (1892), <http://www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk> accessed 16.11.16



Fig. 2: Medieval Mace, University of St. Andrews, (Reproduced courtesy of the University of St Andrews)

#### 2.4. Bedels

The office of bedel (beadle, bedell) is one of the oldest in higher education. There are records of bedels in attendance at inception ceremonies ‘with a mace to hand’ at early medieval universities (Cobham, 1999, p.47, Price, 2005). Like the ceremonial mace, bedels have also been involved in other settings outside higher education. During the medieval period, popes in procession would often be preceded by ‘mazzieri’ [mace bearers] carrying ‘mazza’ [mace] (Braun, 1913), and for centuries since, macebearers have acted as intermediaries on behalf of courts, cities, feudal lords, monarchs and parliaments.

At the early universities of Oxford and Cambridge there were two types of bedel carrying maces at ceremonies: the esquire and yeoman bedel. The esquire bedel was tasked with supporting the administration of the university, acting as an intermediary between town and gown, and was often custodian of ceremonies. They wore robes of

a higher quality and status than yeoman bedels at ceremonies (see fig. 3 below) and were usually M.A.s and prominent figures in university towns (Jackson, 2016). Esquire bedels attended inception ceremonies as well as masses, funerals processions and congregations (Cobham, 1999, p.48). The yeoman bedels had a more modest function in the university. They publicised when meetings of the Chancellor's Court would take place, helped resolve disputes, served writs and collected fees on behalf of the university. They were also often well known in university towns, and required to attend ceremonies at their university in full ceremonial attire. The yeoman bedels at Oxford and Cambridge wore plain stuff gowns (Jackson, 2016). The terms 'yeoman' and 'esquire' were traditionally ranks within the gentry.



Fig. 3: Esquire Bedel and Yeoman Bedel, Oxford University, (T. Uwins) ©British Museum

## **2.5. Academic Dress**

Prescribed academic dress was a feature of early inception ceremonies and also worn by students, academics, and the presiding rector or chancellor of the university.

Academic dress is a collective term used for gowns, hoods and caps worn by staff and students at some schools, many universities and other higher education institutions around the world. Much of the academical attire worn today is embedded in clerical and lay fashion of the medieval period when students adopted similar codes of dress to those worn by clerics and secular clerks. Over the centuries this form of dress has been adapted, a process that has been particularly noticeable in Great Britain since the mid- 1960s (Groves, 2011).

Until this point academic dress was still typically worn on a daily basis at schools and universities, and served as a useful indicator about the wearer's alma mater and level of degree. As more universities opened and other education institutions converted to university status, there was a general decline in formality generally and the daily wear of academic attire diminished or disappeared completely and is now most commonly seen and worn at degree ceremonies.

The current context of global growth in higher education, described further in Chapter Three, is making it difficult to keep track of regulations and adaptations made to academic dress as the number, type and distribution of higher education institutions increases internationally.

Previous notable studies of academical dress in Great Britain and the USA<sup>4</sup> have attempted to provide standard terminology to describe academic robes in the face of imprecise terms and different meanings attributed to these vestments at universities and colleges (Groves, 2001). These studies have recorded rules and regulations about academic dress at different institutions and observed adaptations to accommodate new degrees, variations in the availability of materials, and changes in style and design reflective of the time. The predominant focus has been on academical dress earned through academic achievement with less attention being paid to academic attire worn by senior officials or honorary degree recipients. There have also been few studies about how academical dress has been extended to overseas institutions, and translated internationally in contemporary higher education contexts.

The literature about academical dress suggests that it has developed differently in Great Britain and the USA, despite academical dress in the USA being initially founded on contemporary practice in Great Britain. In the USA the Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume, founded by Gardner Cotrell Leonard in 1887, attempted to standardise academic attire particularly in relation to establishing degree colours for higher education institutions (Wolgast, 2009). Changes in the early part of the twentieth century, including the establishment of new degrees and the disappearance of others, and the impact of growth in the post war period of the 1940s, had a destructive effect on the simple guidelines originally established by the Intercollegiate Bureau and Registry of Academic Costume (Suit, 2014). The literature further suggests that the additional adornments to academic attire in recent years in the USA

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<sup>4</sup> Sources include: Shaw's Academical Dress in Great Britain and Ireland (Groves, 2011), & Transactions of the Burgon Society

are not related to degrees but to political affiliation, fashion, ethnicity and gender (Harrison et al, 1986). These are discussed further in Chapter Five, section 5.4.

In Great Britain and Ireland, the development of academic dress and colour schemes has been driven in the main by robemakers and institutions. Robemakers have influenced the reproduction and perpetuation of academical dress across different institutions and, despite significant growth in the number of new institutions, have managed to ensure it is rare to find two institutions using the same scheme (Groves, 2011). However there are few members of staff in higher education institutions with expert knowledge about academic dress and therefore the advice taken from robemakers is often based on trust. There are signs that alterations and additions to schemes of dress may suit robemakers rather than fit with an institutions basic scheme (e.g. Diploma hoods at Nottingham University), something that has been referred to previously in the past (Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1963).

Robes worn by students awarded a first degree (BA, BSc, LLB) and second degree (Masters) are typically black, although there are exceptions (e.g. The University of East Anglia, The Open University and University of York). Bachelors usually have an open sleeve whereas masters have a closed sleeve with a slit for the arm (Groves, 2011). There are exceptions which give bachelors the closed-sleeve masters' gown (e.g. Bradford University, The Open University and St Andrews, Edinburgh and Stirling).

Doctors are entitled to wear coloured gowns, the colour dependent on the agreed scheme of dress in use at an institution. These robes are customarily worn on special occasions.

Academic dress at contemporary degree ceremonies is widely seen as related to the medieval period; however, its purpose and meaning has evolved incrementally in the

USA and Europe over time, often linked to wider changes in education and societies. For example, Groves (2002) describes a shift in meaning regarding hoods in the nineteenth century which coincided with a period of significant growth in higher education. Hoods associated with degrees had been used to mark a graduating student's entry to bachelor, master or doctor level within a faculty. However, during the nineteenth century the common colour of hoods became differentiated and came to signify entry to a specific degree which, as Groves points out, meant that:

...each degree is seen as discrete – thus it is possible, these days to graduate as BA in English, and then as BA in German in the same university, and claim one has two BAs! The academic hood then comes to signify a certain amount of study completed.

(Groves, N. 2002, p.15)

When women were finally admitted to universities towards the end of the nineteenth century, changes were made to academical dress in some instances to accommodate their requirements. The introduction and use of a soft cap is one example. Often referred to as an Oxford soft cap because of its introduction and use at the University of Oxford in 1920, it was initially designed to accommodate women's hairstyles at the time. Soft caps could have pins run through them whereas square caps could not. This style of cap was in use at Rose University, one of the institutions in this study, until 1985 when it was rejected by a group of female students who saw it as a discriminatory item and wanted to adopt the square cap worn by men. An earlier paper based on evidence in this study has discussed how academic hats in particular have embodied issues of gender in higher education (Wearden, 2015).

The above discussion suggests that academical dress, when compared to mace and bedels, is the most adaptable actor and the one which has most reflected changes in

higher education, and societies more widely. The chapter now turns to review how contemporary accounts of degree ceremonies have treated the actors involved and their historical associations.

## **2.6. Contemporary Degree Ceremonies in Higher Education**

There are surprisingly few academic accounts about degree ceremonies, a point that has been previously noted,

...since the rise of universities in the twelfth century, their image and character have been expressed by costumes, insignia, and ceremonies. Given this and the increasing interest in rituals generally, it is surprising how little scholarly attention has been paid to these academic practices. Moreover, whilst some studies discuss possible anthropological meanings, many do not. The most theoretically sophisticated analysis of academic ritual to date focuses on contemporary higher education in the United States.

(Davies, 2009, p. 141)

The apparent lack of interest in degree ceremonies should not be interpreted as a lack of their importance in higher education (Manning, 2000). It has been suggested that in educational contexts rituals are political acts with the capacity to transmit culture and reveal insights into an organisation's power structure and how power is wielded (Magolda, 2003). However, evidence about how degree ceremonies are constructed in ways that enable them to achieve these effects is limited (Ibid).

One recent study refers to degree ceremonies as:

...a formal campus exiting ritual orchestrated for students as they conclude their academic careers.

(Magolda, 2003, p.779).

However, I would suggest that degree ceremonies orchestrate rather more than this for the students, spectators and institutions hosting them. Magolda (2003) describes how these events provide students with opportunities to mark a rite of passage, and provides glimpses of the opportunities and challenges these events present for institutions hosting them, though does not explore these in depth. While degree ceremonies do appear in literature about higher education, they are rarely the main foci; instead, degree ceremonies are caught up in a wide range of other concerns, priorities and interests. For example, degree ceremonies are mentioned in relation to the legitimization of educational institutions (Morphew, 2002, p.210), the commercialisation and marketisation of higher education (Shanka and Taylor, 2003, p.13), institutional mergers, (Locke, W, 2007, p.87), and increasing student enrolments in higher education (Wilson, 1952).

A broad review suggests there are more non-academic sources such as blogs and online newspaper articles about graduation ceremonies than published academic material such as journal articles. The emphasis throughout this literature is on higher education in the USA, which bears out the point made by Davies earlier (2009) that degree ceremonies have not been widely researched in contemporary higher education. Their relative neglect, despite providing such rich sources of data, is perhaps because they have become taken-for-granted and thereby overlooked as objects of study. (Davies, 2009, Magolda, 2003, Quantz, 1999, Gardner & Van der Veer, 1998).

The existing literature, focused on higher education in the USA, reveals how significant national growth has impacted on degree ceremonies, resulting in large ceremonies that often generate boredom and lack intimacy. The challenges for

institutions hosting large numbers of students at degree ceremonies in the 1950s at six universities in the USA were encapsulated as follows:

Handling masses of students and spectators requires a large and highly trained staff; providing physical facilities, decorations, tickets, degree lists, and diplomas, costs thousands of dollars; presenting a complicated and impressive program demands expert organisation and masterful stage management; and, finally, limiting the ceremony to a reasonable time and yet retaining the personal touch despite the great number of students involved pose difficulties which are almost insuperable.

(Wilson, 1952, p.89)

Despite the pressure associated with increasing post war student enrolments, these six institutions continued to run ceremonies by changing established procedures, venues and practices. This increased the heterogeneity of ceremonies across institutions and reduced the personal intimacy of these events for participants. Less explicit in Wilson (1952) are the reasons why institutions chose to continue to provide degree ceremonies despite the challenges and costs involved. Ceremonies provide an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of students but also benefit the institutions and higher education more generally. For example, they provide institutions with opportunities to develop future networks, streams of funding and publicise the reputation, credentials and heritage of the institution, as well as showcase higher education in general to diverse stakeholders.

Fifty-one years later, Magolda's (2003) account of a degree ceremony in the USA reaffirmed the wearisome effects and reduced intimacy and authenticity associated with large scale degree ceremonies. Magolda (2003) emphasises the benefits that are accrued by institutions that host degree ceremonies and how these predominate over

those of students. He recognises that degree ceremonies can foster positive feelings among students regarding their time in higher education but suggests this effect would be better achieved by smaller more intimate events. As a result of student demand in the 1980s and 1990s smaller additional events were introduced for students according to their colour, ethnicity and sexual orientation (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 1995/1996, 2006). These events have generated intense debate, in the press and the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, about whether they create deeper divisions amongst student populations or celebrate diversity. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that they provide a more personalised experience for students involved in them. These relatively new ceremonial practices cast some light on how issues of diversity are being constructed and resolved on the ground in higher education in the USA yet have received little attention. Pertinent to this study is how these ceremonial practices highlight a new direction in the perpetuation of degree ceremonies in the USA.

Contemporary accounts about degree ceremonies outside the USA are even more difficult to find although there are signs this may be changing. As global growth in higher education reaches unprecedented levels it has been suggested that simultaneously degree ceremonies are '*remorselessly expanding*' (Thrift, Tickell, Woolgar, & Rupp, 2014) but there appears little empirical evidence about this process.

One feature associated with increasing global demand for higher education is the observed increase in student mobility. As students travel overseas to learn, institutions are having to adapt to accommodate more internationally diverse student populations. One study based in Australia highlights how this mobility has led to a commercial spin-off in relation to degree ceremonies. As overseas students return to

their alma mater to attend their degree ceremony local tourism and hospitality providers benefit from the business brought by returning students (Shanka and Taylor, 2003). This finding highlights how a new market has emerged alongside a higher education institution in relation to degree ceremonies but there are few studies to consider such effects more widely.

Thus, there are indications that current global growth in higher education is influencing the perpetuation and extension of degree ceremonies on the ground in ways not previously documented. However, notably absent from contemporary accounts about degree ceremonies are in-depth descriptions concerning actors and their historical associations, a point lamented by Magolda (2003). Material features of degree ceremonies and the physical layout of venues are deemed symbolically important and capable of generating particular effects such as power and hierarchy, but empirical evidence about how these effects are assembled and achieved is less clear. Both Wilson (1952) and Magolda (2003) allude to the agentive effects of material and spatial features of ceremonies but do not provide a framework of inquiry allowing their explanation.

## **2.7. Overview**

From the limited evidence available about ceremonial life in medieval universities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, we can deduce these early incarnations of higher education institutions were not the materially rich environments we take for granted today. However, from the thirteenth century onwards there is evidence of a convergence in the ceremonial features and practices found across different universities (Price, 2005, Wieruszowski, 1966), namely: ceremonial mace, bedels carrying mace, academical dress, academics, students, Chancellor or Rector as presiding officer, and festivities after ceremonies. Remarkably all these features and

practices are evident at many ceremonies today, including those in this study, albeit with varying degrees of change in the intervening years. Ceremonial mace were found to have changed least in terms of their purpose, use, and sometimes even in terms of the mace themselves. This extraordinary resilience renders them as stable actors in degree ceremonies. However, a distinction was found in the literature that suggested ancient mace in Scottish universities had a different historical trajectory to those in ancient English universities. This would support Fogelin and Schiffer's (2015) suggestion that objects, much as people, can have different rites of passage during their life history. This point was most apparent in relation to academical dress, which was found more susceptible to change than mace. Sometimes the purpose and use attributed to items of academical dress appears to have changed more rapidly than the item of dress itself. Academical dress is therefore a more fluid actor than ceremonial mace, and as such a useful one to observe in relation to how changes in higher education are embodied in degree ceremonies. Of interest here is how two material actors appear to have contributed in different ways to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time: mace in terms of their stability, and academical dress in terms of its adaptability. Also pertinent to the framework of this inquiry is how these material actors are only able to enact these effects because of their relations with other actors, including bedels. Yet, as discussed in the second half of this chapter, contemporary studies about degree ceremonies have neglected to provide in-depth accounts of social and material actors, their historical associations, or how material actors specifically contribute to the construction of meaning, and perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time.

Perhaps most surprising, given the resilience and prevalence of ceremonies in higher education systems around the world, is the relative lack of interest in degree

ceremonies by educational researchers (Davies, 2009, Magolda, 2003, Manning, 2000, Gardner & Vander Veer, 1998). This is despite findings in previous studies that demonstrate how degree ceremonies have the capacity to reveal and transmit culture, and provide insights into those organizing and participating in them (Wilson, 1952, Magolda, 2003). The limited literature tends to focus on the USA and highlights that despite the challenges brought by post war growth institutions have continued to host ceremonies. This resilience indicates the importance attributed to these occasions by institutions and suggests there are benefits for those hosting them. According to contemporary studies these benefits include being able to develop networks, help secure future streams of funding, as well as transmit a positive view of the institution itself and higher education more generally.

The way in which degree ceremonies serve students was positioned differently across the literature. Based on studies coming out of the USA, degree ceremonies were seen to provide students with a formal exiting ritual designed to make them feel good about the investment they had made in higher education. However, these positive effects tended to be undermined by the large-scale character of ceremonies. The emergence of additional smaller ceremonies for students according to race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, initially driven by students, illustrates how degree ceremonies are being perpetuated in different ways. This new direction for degree ceremonies is also perhaps a response to the large scale impersonal ceremonies characteristic of many campuses in the USA.

Missing from contemporary literature about degree ceremonies are studies that consider the construction and perpetuation of degree ceremonies outside the USA or which consider the current context of international growth. The remorseless expansion of degree ceremonies referred to recently (Thrift, Tickell, Woolgar &

Rupp, 2014) suggests that as higher education is expanding so too are degree ceremonies, although there is little evidence available about how or where this is happening.

Another study (Shanka and Taylor, 2003) noted that increasing student mobility, seen here as another feature of international growth, had stimulated business for local tourism as overseas students travelled back to their alma mater for their graduation. This observation suggests degree ceremonies are entangled in marketing activity in higher education though studies exploring how this is happening on the ground are limited. Consequently, with few studies about marketing activity in relation to degree ceremonies, and fewer still that take into account the unprecedented international growth currently occurring in higher education, Chapter Three situates this study to identify its potential contribution.

## **Chapter 3 Relationships between Growth, Marketing and Degree Ceremonies**

It has been argued that growth has an impact on every aspect of higher education and that it creates challenges for higher education systems (Trow, 1973). This appears to include degree ceremonies. A review of contemporary literature in the previous chapter established that periods of growth and marketing have impacted upon degree ceremonies in the past. However, few studies have explored the way current conditions of growth impact on these occasions nor how marketing activity alluded to in previous studies is enacted through them. Examining how these global forces of change in higher education are being resolved and enacted locally through degree ceremonies provides an alternative window on how institutions are responding in practice. Attending to conditions of growth and marketing may also allow a better understanding of the change and continuity observed in degree ceremonies. Hence the focus in this chapter is to ascertain the conditions of growth and marketing in higher education at the time of this study and draw out the potential consequences and relationships they have with degree ceremonies, and thus on the ceremonies included in this study.

This chapter is about these conditions and the various approaches to them. It is designed to establish a framework that can be used to inform the analysis of degree ceremonies included in this study.

### **3.1. How is Higher Education Growing?**

In Chapter Two, the context of growth in contemporary literature about degree ceremonies was largely confined to the impact that significant increases in student enrolment had on the organisation and experience of degree ceremonies in the USA (Wilson, 1952, Magolda, 2003). This section focuses on unprecedented levels of

growth occurring elsewhere in higher education at the time of this study. It identifies different types of growth and considers the consequences of each for degree ceremonies. These types include:

- Institutional growth
- Growth and mobility of student population

The aim is to establish similarities and differences between the context of this study and earlier ones.

### 3.1.1. Institutional Growth

Significant periods of growth in higher education are not new as Table 1 demonstrates below (Tight, 2009). Establishing institutional growth between the eleventh and nineteenth centuries was a relatively straightforward task, because during this period institutions were easily identified as universities and recording growth was manageable.

However, accessing figures for institutional growth in the twentieth century was more difficult (Table 2). First, because the scale of growth has been significantly larger but also because it was difficult finding reliable figures to track and verify. Figures tend to vary from one source to another, and are more readily available and accessible in some parts of the world than others. Second, in recent years the emergence of different types of public and private higher education institutions make them less easily identified as universities. Finally, figures are constantly changing as new institutions are founded, and others closed. Therefore, Table 2 should be viewed with these caveats in mind.

## Institutional Growth in Higher Education by Region between 11th and 19th Century

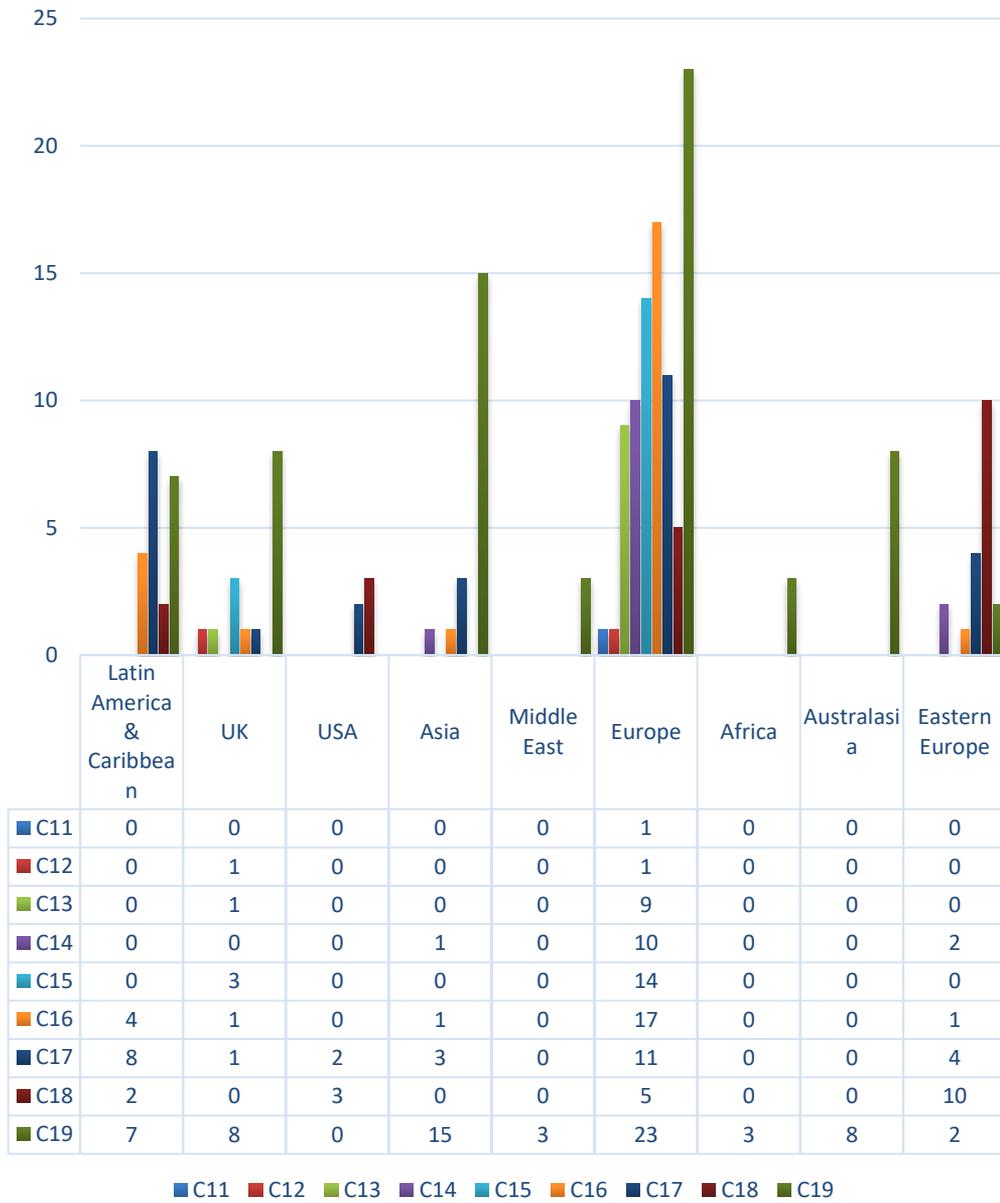


Table 1: International Growth of Universities from 11<sup>th</sup> Century to 19<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Source: The International Association of Universities Worldwide Database of Higher Education Institutions, Systems and Credentials (WHED), List of oldest universities still in continuous operation, Wikipedia accessed 12.8.16

The rudimentary assessment shown in Table 1 and Table 2 shows a distinct difference in the scale and distribution of institutional growth in higher education in recent years.

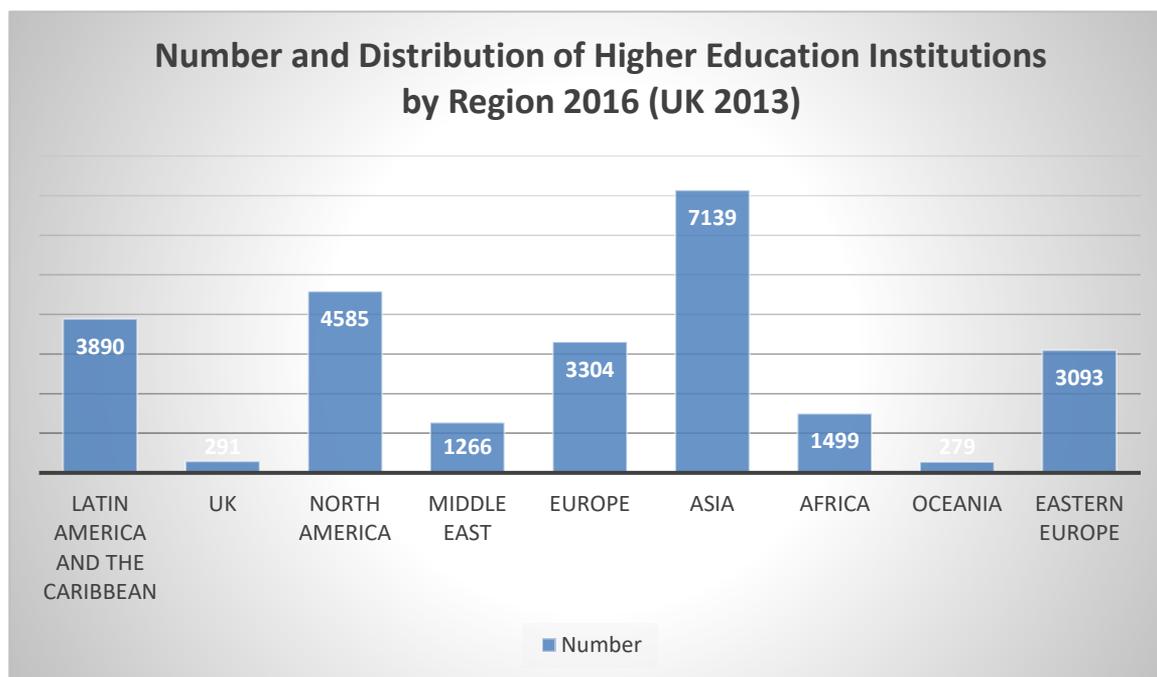


Table 2: Approximate Number of Higher Education Institutions by Region 2016 (UK 2013)<sup>6</sup>

Taken together, these Tables show how European institutions dominated higher education for centuries, and how this position was usurped in the twentieth century, first by the USA, and then more recently by Asia.

During the twentieth century thousands of new higher education institutions opened. There were spikes of growth in America and Europe before and after both World Wars, and again in the UK in the 1960s when a group of new universities were established, including the UK's first distance learning provider, the Open University.

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<sup>6</sup> Data collected by region on Ranking Web of Universities, Table 2016.2.1. (corrected) (accessed 6.8.16) <http://www.webometrics.info>. North America includes USA and Canada. Asia includes: China, India, S.E. Asia. UK data collected via Universities and higher education, List of Recognised Bodies with degree awarding authority (2013), (accessed 6.8.16) <http://www.gov.uk>.

Up to this point universities were embedded in specific places, communities, cities and towns, and their identity was bound up in their locality (Marginson, 2016).

When former polytechnics and Central Institutions in the UK converted to university status following the passing of the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992, many of them undertook re-branding exercises as a way of identifying themselves as universities whilst still retaining some institutional differentiation (van Vught, 2008, Allen and Simmons, 2009). These former polytechnics and Central Institutions were potentially able to attract more funding, students, and staff by becoming universities but only in competition with existing universities that were already well established.

How institutional growth has been achieved locally and further afield has also varied in recent years, and has included the establishment of international branch campuses, education hubs, and different types of institutional partnerships. Such international collaborative activity amongst higher education institutions is also not new. Colonial powers in the past influenced the opening of new education institutions in other countries and some would argue this influence continues in the context of neo-colonialism. However, there have been few studies about the current influx of institutional relationships, although a recent increase in the number of studies about them suggests they are beginning to draw the interest of educational researchers (Knight, 2013, 2014, Tierney and Lanford, 2015, Wilkins and Huisman, 2013, 2011, Karram, 2014).

One of the ways this growth is occurring is through the opening of overseas branch campuses. Establishing and running a branch campus overseas presents many challenges including how to build and develop the identity and image of the institution (Shams & Huisman, 2014, Huisman & Mampaey, 2016). How closely should the branch campus identify with the traditions, institutions, practices and

identities associated with the host country? How much with the home country? These corresponding pressures have been found to impact on the strategic development and implementation of curriculum, staffing and research (Shams & Huisman, 2014).

It has been suggested that these are the core activities by which international branch campuses deliver their services (Ibid). However, I would suggest that how degree ceremonies are organised and assembled at branch campuses also contributes to the public image, reputation and perception of quality of branch campuses; as such, degree ceremonies are arguably involved in the strategic positioning of them. The question of how degree ceremonies resolve these objectives in the context of different types of institutional partnership arrangements, hitherto relatively neglected by educational researchers, is of interest to this study.

In summary, reviewing institutional growth at the time of this study reveals a complex picture that is markedly different from the context of growth at the time of Wilson's study (1952). The emergence of countless new public and private institutions entering the sector around the world and the introduction of different types of collaborative institutional partnerships has resulted in a complex landscape that requires institutions to work both collaboratively and competitively. Institutional growth also implies some growth in demand for higher education.

### 3.1.2. Growth in terms of Student Population

As the number and diversity of institutions continues to grow, so do the number and diversity of students entering higher education. In the UK in 1960, there were 123,500 students registered at universities. By 2011-2012 this figure had grown to 2.5 million, of which 435,230 were international students (Tight, 2009, p.55).

UNESCO figures charting the number of students around the world enrolling in tertiary education show that in 1970, 28.6 million students were registered at higher education institutions. In 2000, this number had increased to 100.8 million and by 2007 had reached 152.5 million (UNESCO, 2010). The number of students enrolled in higher education around the world has doubled over the last twenty-two years (Marginson, 2016, p.245) and predictions suggest that the world's population of higher education students will reach 262 million by the year 2025 (Goddard, 2012). Institutions currently holding degree ceremonies in intimate settings for smaller numbers of students may find in future that they face similar situations to those experienced by the six institutions in the USA described in Wilson's study mentioned earlier in Chapter Two (Wilson, 1952).

However, while student enrolments in tertiary education are currently increasing globally this does not mean that increases are occurring in the same way, or having the same effects, in different places. On the contrary, these broad global figures hide many complex contextual issues for higher education. One such issue is that increasing participation is not always equally distributed, funded, experienced or of the same quality. For instance, whilst the overall number of women participating in higher education globally has never been higher, disturbing statistics show that in some places women are still either prevented from participating in higher education or are under-represented (UIS, 2010, p.12). Even in parts of the world where higher education has been established for a long time, such as the UK, women are still under-represented on governing bodies and within the professoriate (HEFCE, April, 2016). Distribution and representation in higher education can also vary according to geographical region:

In some countries aspirations for higher education have become near universal. For example, families and schools in East Asia expect every student to be a high achiever, a strong point for tertiary participation

(Marginson, 2011, p.245)

General student enrolment statistics do not therefore reveal the detailed complexities and inequalities of how growth is distributed. However, not only is the student population in higher education growing it is also becoming more mobile.

### 3.1.3. Overseas Students and Student Mobility: The Return of the Travelling Scholar?

Between 1961 and 1962, overseas students in the UK accounted for 10% of all full-time students in higher education, with 60% of those students coming from Commonwealth countries (Robbins Report, 1963, p.22). Between 2012 and 2013 overseas students accounted for 18.2% of students enrolled in UK higher education institutions, with 70.5% of those coming from outside the European Union (HESA, 2014). Of those in the top ten countries sending students to the UK, 33% were from Commonwealth countries and 67% from non-EU, non-Commonwealth countries. The difference between those coming from Commonwealth countries and non-Commonwealth countries can be accounted for by the large number of Chinese students now coming to study in the UK (HESA, 2014-2015). These figures show how the number of overseas students in the UK has increased since the 1960s, but also how the destinations they are travelling from have changed.

The number of students travelling to study at higher education institutions outside their home country rose to approximately 5 million in 2014, and is projected to rise to 8 million by 2025 (OECD). This pattern of mobility evokes the travelling scholar of the medieval period albeit in quite different circumstances. Today increasing student

mobility is often driven by schemes such as the ERASMUS programme aimed at improving mobility in Europe, or on a smaller scale, the University Mobility in Asia and Pacific programme (UMAP). These regional initiatives have prompted some to question whether they get in the way of intercontinental and global mobility or if their selectivity is a contributory factor and reflection of a tendency towards the commodification of student mobility (Van Damme, 2001). Student mobility is also taking place more spontaneously outside these various programmes and is being driven by a number of different factors including different access arrangements in different countries, the perceived quality of education in a host country, and language and cultural considerations (Gordon and Jallade, 1996). There is a genuine demand for higher education abroad although it is worth bearing in mind that demand can also fluctuate (Hazelkorn, 2011), and that international diversity in student populations is also achieved through immigration, (Gordon and Jallade, 1996).

There are few studies though to suggest how international movement and enrolment of international students directly impacts on degree ceremonies. However, it is likely that student population growth and mobility is reflected in the student demographic attending ceremonies. Accommodating increasingly diverse student and family attendees at ceremonies may, in turn, bring new challenges for organisers of ceremonies. For example, what happens when students have returned to their home country and can't afford to return for their ceremony? How do ceremonies accommodate diverse cultural audiences? And what can institutions do when large numbers of overseas students and their families wish to travel to attend a ceremony but there are only a limited number of tickets available?

Research exploring such matters is sparse; one study looked at how returning overseas students are accommodated at degree ceremonies, and concluded that organisers of

ceremonies should be encouraged to work closely with local tourism businesses to develop specific provision for overseas students and their families (Shanka and Taylor, 2003). The market described in Shanka and Taylor (2003) was based on economic principles of demand and supply, although section 3.3 points out later that not all markets associated with higher education are based on the same economic principles.

In summary this section demonstrates that increases in the number and type of institutions have been matched by subsequent increases in demand for higher education, particularly overseas, which is transforming the higher education landscape making it more complex, compelling leaders to strategically adapt and prompting staff to find practical ways to respond to these changes. I would go on to argue that the global nature of this growth has hitherto been overlooked by previous studies about degree ceremonies. The analysis provided in Part II aims to make a contribution in this respect.

Before proceeding further it is worth briefly considering what is driving current growth in higher education, because it draws attention to another force of change that has the potential to impact on degree ceremonies.

### **3.2. What is Driving Current Growth in Higher Education?**

As previously mentioned, significant periods of growth are not new in higher education (Trow, 1973). However, growth at the time of this study has been shown to be unprecedented in terms of its rate, scale and complexity. Whilst it is difficult to accurately account for why there has been such tremendous growth there are arguably a number of factors that have contributed to the current state of affairs, most notably the assertion that knowledge is the predominant factor of production as societies move

to post-industrialisation (Bell, 1973). This transition coincides with the introduction and use of digital technologies that provide capacity to work in real time on a global scale (Castell, 1996) and the establishment of new trade agreements in 1995 by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The latter included services for the first time in addition to goods, by introducing intellectual property law and protection into the international trading system (Altbach, 2004), thus positioning higher education as a global industry. Jessop (2017) argues that the narrative underpinning the economic and social imaginary of a knowledge based economy focuses attention on forces of change that are drawing closer ties between the academy and capitalism, although he suggests we are still far from a profit oriented, market mediated form of capitalism (Ibid).

Nevertheless, collectively these changes have seen an increase in government interventions in higher education and a surge of new entrants joining the sector keen to capitalise on perceived opportunities that a global knowledge based economy presents. Policy interventions in some countries, including the UK, designed to generate competitive market conditions in higher education reflect policy maker's views that higher education institutions have a vital role to play but also how many higher education institutions are dependent on national political structures (Van Damme, 2001). However these policy interventions do not always achieve the effects that policy makers initially desired (Marginson, 2013, van Vught, 2008, Dill, 1997). For example, it has been argued that the withdrawal of public sources of funding has diminished the social returns associated with higher education and increasingly foregrounded the private benefits" (van Vught, 2008, p.170), thus potentially undermining the public mission of universities as organisations that are distinguishable because of their public and private roles (Marginson, 2011).

Furthermore, while there are now more students and institutions in the sector, this does not mean that efforts at widening participation have been attained or that the graduate jobs market has similarly grown (Tomlinson, 2008, Brown and Hesketh, 2004, Dill, 1997).

The tremendous growth experienced in higher education in recent years has not resulted in a utopian global level playing field but rather a complex and increasingly stratified environment that makes it more difficult to make comparisons between institutions.

Global rankings introduced in 2003 by Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China sought to provide some comparative data about higher education institutions at a time when many new institutions were entering the sector and in the process stimulated the generation of other comparative ranking mechanisms (Hazelkorn, 2011). One of the ensuing effects has been to intensify competition in the sector. Van Damme (2001) has argued that if competition increases in the sector, as it appears to have done, then institutions will be increasingly driven to distinguish themselves from competitors based on quality. This in turn implies that higher education is likely to see an increase in marketing activity as institutions seek to promote themselves as quality institutions. How degree ceremonies may be potentially entangled in this marketing activity is discussed below.

### **3.3. Establishing an Approach to Marketing**

Markets and marketing in higher education are a complex affair. It has been suggested that discourse and debate about marketing in higher education has been confusing, largely because of a lack of understanding about what markets are and how they operate (Smith, 2004). For instance, what many perceive as market mechanisms

are, according to other commentators, politically orchestrated changes related to how higher education is funded, and that real markets are less orchestrated and have a way of resolving themselves (Ibid). Controversies also persist about whether markets driven by economic imperatives of demand and supply can be as easily applied in the context of higher education, where such approaches are seen to have the potential to undermine the public good of the sector (Marginson, 2011, van Vught, 2008, Dill, 1997). However, Shanka and Taylor (2003) provide evidence of how an external market emerges in relation to degree ceremonies that is based on economic principles of demand and supply.

What is of interest in this study is how markets are being made and shaped in higher education, in particular degree ceremonies, an area that is relatively under researched (Komljenovic and Robertson, 2016). For the purpose of this study this position is aligned with the following three distinctions that can be made about markets in higher education. First that higher education is not a single market but rather a multitude of markets that aren't necessarily mutually exclusive, but often networked through relations which corresponds with the framework of inquiry being applied in this study (Jongbloed, 2003, Dill, 1997). Degree ceremonies are pertinent in this context because they are occasions where diverse groups of stakeholders are gathered together in one place, thus presenting potential opportunities for engaging in marketing activity and communications with multiple stakeholders. Second, higher education markets are often restricted by public policy interventions (Dill, 1997), and thirdly the basis of competition in higher education often includes qualitative features that are: difficult to measure, open to multiple interpretations and often interrelated, for example, 'quality', 'credentials'(qualifications, awards) and 'institutional image and reputation'.

### **3.4. Degree Ceremonies as Potential Sites for Marketing**

Degree ceremonies provide an excellent place to display and communicate institutional image, reputation, quality and credentials, and that of higher education more generally, to a wide range of stakeholders, a point implicitly made in Wilson (1952) and more explicitly in Magolda (2003).

It has been claimed that higher education institutions use speeches and marketing literature, evident in many degree ceremonies, to position themselves strategically and in relation to other institutions (Huisman and Mampaey, 2016, MacDonald, 2013).

When included in degree ceremonies these features therefore provide potential opportunities for comparable marketing communication activity. In Magolda (2003) speeches at degree ceremonies were positive and aimed at more than one stakeholder group. This makes them useful occasions for institutions that seek to assemble and promote multiple positive images to different stakeholder groups (MacDonald (2013). However it has been suggested that in the context of a competitive environment what is communicated may need to be treated with some caution (Ibid).

Degree ceremonies are also occasions that draw attention to the credentials (qualifications and awards) that institutions confer. Some argue that mass higher education has seen a degradation in value of credentials earned by students in an increasingly competitive graduate employment market (Tomlinson, 2008, Brown and Hesketh, 2004). For institutions this is troubling because their credibility rests on public trust in the credentials and experience they offer students, degradation of the value of credentials is a serious concern for them (Room, 2000).

Students in the meantime are having to find alternative ways to differentiate themselves in the eyes of employers through achieving high grades, postgraduate

credentials or through the profile and reputation of the institutions they attend (Tomlinson, 2008). In order to attract and retain students it is therefore of interest to institutions to be seen to be helping students meet these requirements. One of the ways they do this is through communicating positive messages about institutional image and reputation not only through speeches and marketing literature but also by using visual images and photography (MacDonald, 2013, Anctil, 2008). Degree ceremonies provide attractive propositions for such marketing activity because they are rich, colourful, symbolic, and highly visual occasions.

Yet despite evidence of credential degradation in established systems such as the UK and USA, government policies are still presenting higher education credentials as vital for economic development in order to meet the needs of a knowledge based economy (DfES, 2003). Institutions are therefore under pressure to respond to both of these conflicting positions. Furthermore at a time of significant international growth these isomorphic pressures appear to be perpetuating because there has been a tendency to slavishly copy policies and practices developed in Western educational environments in the quest for world class status (Deem, Mok and Lucas, 2008). The shift from elite to mass higher education raises another problem in relation to credentials, that of quality assurance.

Students are often attracted to higher education systems and institutions that are associated with having a reputation for quality and which are internationally recognized and as a result it therefore becomes incumbent on institutions to compete to attempt to maintain these perceptions in order to secure funding and other resources (Hodson and Thomas, 2010). This has resulted in what van Vught (2008) describes as a reputation race. Reputation in this instance is defined as,

...the image (quality, influence, trustworthiness) an institution has in the eyes of others. Reputation is the subjective reflection of the various actions an institution undertakes to create an external image.

(van Vught, 2008, p.169)

Whilst ranking mechanisms are considered important tools in the construction of institutional reputation (van Vught, 2008) they do not capture the more qualitative aspects of it,

...which is also generated over the *longue durée* and through the role that different universities play in processes of local, national and transnational education and development. Reputation is also established through relations with other actors, with governments, civil society, private sector, students, families and alumni, and the broader publics of national and transnational society,

..... as metrics proliferate at international, regional domestic disciplinary and institutional scales – universities are faced with multiple publics for which reputation can be interpreted in different ways and with different implications.

(Collins and Park, 2015, p.116)

Degree ceremonies provide alternative opportunities for institutions to assemble and transmit reputation. As public events that gather together different stakeholders in one place, they have the opportunity to display and transmit their image and reputation not just through traditional rankings but also more subtle ways.

Institutional image building through international branch campuses, educational hubs, and other types of institutional relationships highlights the importance given to

institutional reputation in a higher education market environment that is international and simultaneously collaborative and competitive (van Vught, 2008, Hazelkorn, 2011). Although how institutional reputation, image and quality are resolved in institutional partnerships is less clear. It has been suggested that branch campus students consider programmes to be high quality when they are similar to those offered at the home campus (Wilkins and Huisman, 2013). However, what is deemed 'similar' is ambiguous and concerns have been raised about whether it is possible to provide similar learning experiences and content in locations that do not necessarily share the same cultural values and assumptions (Coleman, 2003, Tikly, 2004, Shams & Huisman, 2014). How different cultural values and assumptions are resolved in the construction of degree ceremonies in these collaborative partnerships is discussed further in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

### **3.5. Overview**

In summary, this chapter found that conditions of growth at the time of this study were substantially different to those described in earlier accounts about degree ceremonies described in Chapter Two. The overall effect of recent international growth in higher education has been to make the sector larger and more complex, making comparisons difficult. Ranking mechanisms have been deployed in an attempt to bring some clarity for those wishing to compare the myriad institutions now engaged in higher education. However, this study argues that more qualitative subtle methods of comparison might also be significant, and that degree ceremonies provide a potential public platform upon which these can be assembled and enacted. At the time of this study Asia dominated the higher education sector in terms of growth in the number of institutions, student enrolment and mobility. But more students are also travelling from more diverse destinations than ever before to other

countries to engage in higher education. One of the consequences of increasing student mobility for organisers of degree ceremonies is that in some cases they are having to cater for a more internationally diverse and mobile student demographic. Apart from notable exceptions such as Shanka and Taylor (2003), few accounts describe the impact of student mobility on degree ceremonies or relationships between other markets and degree ceremonies.

Previous studies have alluded to marketing but not focused on it in any depth. Yet this chapter suggests that the narrative underpinning the economic and social imaginary of a knowledge based economy along with current conditions of growth are driving a reputation race amongst institutions in higher education, which in turn appears to be increasing the prevalence of marketing activity across the sector. I suggest this includes degree ceremonies which provide useful occasions for institutions to engage in marketing activity and that this in turn is making degree ceremonies more significant.

What is of interest to this study is how markets and marketing activity are being assembled and enacted through degree ceremonies, and the role of material actants in this process. The relationships between growth, marketing and degree ceremonies are discussed further in Part II.

The following chapter describes how questions and interests raised in Chapters Two and Three informed the framework of inquiry and methodological route chosen for this study.

## **Chapter 4 Framework of Inquiry and Methodological Route**

The overall aim of this chapter is to demonstrate why the framework of inquiry and resulting methodology were chosen for this study. This is done by first drawing on basic theoretical devices used in actor-network theory to demonstrate how these are applied to degree ceremonies, particularly in terms of how they are assembled, re-assembled and disrupted. Choosing this approach also affords nonhuman features of degree ceremonies the same analytical privilege as humans and provides capacity to demonstrate how these contribute to the durability and stabilisation of ceremonies over time (Callon and Latour, 1981). This discussion prepares the ground for an examination of how degree ceremonies are perpetuated.

The framework of inquiry is then extended by drawing attention to preparation and maintenance work at ceremonies that is often hidden from view, and how this contributes to effects and meanings generated through degree ceremonies in conjunction with actants and their associations (Denis and Pontille, 2010, 2011).

The methodology used to apply the framework is then discussed in relation to questions and interests being pursued in this study.

### **4.1. Position being taken in this Research**

I recognise that my own ontological position impacts on how I consider knowledge to be constructed, and therefore impacts on this research study. My own world view is informed by social democratic politics that do not subscribe to extreme ideologies and forms of hegemonic domination that restrict the freedoms and choices of citizens in societies. I am strongly in favour of cultural diversity and recognise the powerful effects that rituals can produce. As a widely-travelled, white, western woman with working class roots, I have had some insight into the reflexive nature of ceremonial

rituals and how they can be culturally situated, interpreted and learnt, although at the outset of this study I had very little knowledge about degree ceremonies. I had only ever previously attended my own degree ceremony, having completed my first degree in 1996 at the age of thirty two.

Being a novice at the outset of this study was a distinct advantage from an actor-network theorist's point of view. As I knew so little about degree ceremonies, I was fortunate in not holding any *a priori* assumptions about them. It also meant that most of the people I initially met and talked to knew a great deal more about these events than I did. There were respondents who had attended numerous ceremonies at different institutions and others who had attended hundreds at a specific institution. Most students, in contrast, attend only a handful of degree ceremonies during their lifetime. My position as a researcher attending more ceremonies than the average student and many fewer than an institutional 'expert' meant that I was not only able to familiarise myself with the ceremonies, but also regard them with a more dispassionate gaze, perhaps, than someone more intimately familiar with them. Hammersley and Atkinson (2005) suggest that it is important for researchers to maintain some distance in order to try to attain some analytical objectivity. Consequently, I positioned myself as a learner within the field and considered the social locations of respondents and the potential variance, changeability and temporality of their responses. This not only applied to respondents but also to myself as the researcher. As I learnt more about degree ceremonies I realised that I had to update what I had previously known about them, and was constantly having to revisit my own interpretations about the various actors involved in the ceremonies. These revisions were recorded in diaries kept throughout this research study. My experience in the field resonated with Foucault's idea that power and knowledge are

embodied and enacted everywhere through ‘regimes of truth’ that pervade societies and that these are constantly being negotiated, reinforced or changed (Foucault, 1991). This seemed particularly pertinent in the case of degree ceremonies where many ‘truths’ appeared to be associated with them, a point which resonates with the framework of inquiry applied in this study (Mol, 2002).

My view is one of many different ontological views that could be taken; a point that is pertinent to this study. For example, in Chapter Three it was argued that higher education is undergoing a period of growth that is transforming the sector into a more complex and dynamic endeavour leaving it open to multiple interpretations.

Similarly, in the making and shaping of markets in higher education there are multiple stakeholders with diverse interests who are likely to have multiple and diverse views about how the world is constructed in relation to higher education.

The perpetuation of degree ceremonies is so taken-for-granted to go unquestioned, thus giving the impression they are fixed, unchanging, predictable, and ‘out there’. Yet, the position taken here is that the perpetuation of degree ceremonies is a constant on-going process, only possible because of a great deal of work, much of which goes on hidden from view, behind the scenes. Degree ceremonies are thus rendered dynamic, with the potential to change or be disrupted. The perception that they are fixed and unchanging then requires explanation about how these effects are produced and transmitted. A point similarly made by Law as follows,

...if everything is flow, then how come so much stays in place? How is it that through those flows some kind of quasi-stability is secured?

(Law, 2001, p.3)

The position taken here rests on a constructionist theory of knowledge, where the world is considered highly complex and continually ‘in process’, and meaning is

developed through interactions between different entities (human and nonhuman), which are perceived as being constantly made and re-made, and open to different interpretations. Mol (1999) describes this as ‘ontological politics’ where attention is drawn to the constant, dynamic making, re-making and shaping of the real world through practice.

What follows is how a framework of inquiry was constructed and shaped in a way suited to the questions and interests described in the first part of this thesis.

#### **4.2. Why Actor-Network Theory?**

An initial search through literature about ritual studies did not find an approach that matched the interests of this study (Van Gennep, 1960, Moore and Myerhoff, 1977, Bell, 1992, Sennett, 2012). Material aspects of ritual did feature but were not given the analytical capacity that I was seeking. Furthermore, these theories appeared too prescriptive to capture all the areas of interest driving this study. Goffman’s work provides some interesting corollaries with this study in terms of his descriptions of front stage and back stage behaviour and how it resonates with ‘performance or acting’ which are also often referred to in association with secular ritual (Goffman, 1959, Sennett, 2012, Moore and Myerhoff, 1977). However despite mentioning the interrelatedness of nonhuman actors in a dramaturgical sense, and how cultural context can exert influence over human behaviour Goffman’s work does not explore in depth the agentive contribution of nonhumans to many of the effects he discusses (Goffman, 1959, 1967, 1971).

Turning to literature about cultures, Welsch’s (1999) description of Transculturality had a number of attractive qualities, including claims that would suit an increasingly complex landscape of higher education. This is because Welsch rejects classically

defined conceptualisations of cultures claiming instead that we live in entangled networks that are defined by their heterogeneity, intertwining and intermingling (Ibid). He argues that it is no longer possible to categorize or assume social homogenisation, ethnic consolidation or ethnic delimitation ('them and us'). In fact, he argues that we have never lived in such a world. Instead, Welsch describes how for centuries we have intermixed and intermingled through classical cultural boundaries which he holds makes it difficult to argue the case for single cultures (Welsch, 1999).

However, after initially working with this approach I found it had several shortcomings. First, whilst Welsch (1999) alludes to the importance of materials he does not explicitly acknowledge their influence or involvement in relation to transculturation, and second, he provides no in-depth discussion about how transculturation occurs in practice. It became more apparent that my interests lay in the actual mechanics of degree ceremonies, and how they are made, re-made and how social and material actants and their associations are involved in the assemblage of various effects and meanings. Thus, Transculturality was not chosen to drive this research but is referred to again later in Chapter 8.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was also considered as a potential theoretical route, because it explores relationships between history and current activity, and recognises the importance that material artefacts play in socio-material interactions. However, CHAT adopts a human centred position which relegates the nonhuman to a mediatory role. This did not seem to resonate with degree ceremonies which include distinctive material actors that appear to be mediators clearly involved in making and shaping these events (Sayes, 2014).

These theoretical approaches appeared to either to take materiality for granted, to render it powerless or to relegate it to the background context (Fenwick, Edwards, Sawchuk, 2011). The same can be said for previous studies about degree ceremonies with the exception of Magolda (2003) who alludes to how material aspects of these events are involved in generating effects such as hierarchy, power and authority. Actor-network theory appeared to provide opportunities to include the materiality of degree ceremonies in ways other theoretical routes considered could not. By providing the analytical possibility for non-humans and humans to have agentive capacity it becomes possible to consider how social and material actants might be involved in the production of different effects such as hierarchy, power and authority. However, whilst actor-network theory focuses on how effects such as these are produced through interactions and associations between social and material actants, it does not seek to consider how actants are placed, ordered, prepared, maintained or repaired in order for such connections to be made. Therefore, the framework of inquiry used here does not rely solely on theoretical devices used in actor-network theory, but extends it by including Denis and Pontille's (2010, 2011, 2013) work about preparation, maintenance and repair work involved in the extension, replication and modification of networks.

Actor-network theory is therefore in the business of describing rather than criticising. It is not a critical theoretical approach and this study is not framed as such. Instead actor-network theory draws attention to the inter-relatedness (or not) of human and nonhuman actants, their connections and capacity for agency in degree ceremonies and that does not analytically privilege one over the other from the outset.

Actors in actor-network theory can be human, nonhuman, or collectively referred to as 'actants'. Actants have the capacity to act, transform and exert influence through

interactions with other actants (Mützel, 2009). These interactions leave traces that can be found, described and followed by researchers in the field (Latour, 2005).

Adherents of actor network theory share a commitment to understanding how actants come together and hold together (or not) for however long to form associations that can produce agency or other effects such as: power, authority, similarity, difference, formality, informality, rules and reforms (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010). Like other material semiotic approaches, actor-network theory describes the enactment of these actants, the relations and effects they generate and how they assemble and reassemble a wide range of actors such as objects, people, machines, ideas, organisations, spaces, places, nature, scale and sizes (Law, 2009).

A specific feature of actor-network theory is that no a-priori distinctions are made at the outset about whether human or nonhuman actants can exert more or less influence over the other. This is not an ethical position but an analytical stance (Law, 2003).

Actor-network theory does not deny that there can be significant differences between actors but argues that differences are only found through fieldwork. For example, if we want to look closely at the mechanics of degree ceremonies it is important not to start out by assuming that which we seek to explain (Law, 2003).

Following actor-network theory, objects are not seen as stable or fixed but temporary connections that are held together. For example, a television is seen as just that, until the point it breaks down and the inner workings are suddenly revealed. Similarly, this study scrutinised 'degree ceremonies' to understand the inner workings of them. This position subscribes to actor-network theory's stance that society and the social are not pre-existing objects of enquiry but emerge through enactments of various forms of association as network effects (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, Law, 2009).

However, like many rituals, I would argue that the repetitious and constrained nature of degree ceremonies over a long period of time creates an expectation of degree ceremonies in the future, and provides a sense of continuity and connection with the past. A feature also associated with secular rituals mentioned earlier in Chapter Two. This point is pertinent with respect to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies of concern here.

This study is particularly interested in how nonhuman features of degree ceremonies are perpetuated over time because, as pointed out in Chapter Two, they have the capacity for durability and stability that humans do not (Callon and Latour, 1981).

Furthermore, nonhuman actants as well as human can be mobile which allows them to be followed and traced across imaginary boundaries to different spaces and places, providing opportunities to examine the extension and perpetuation of ceremonies in this way too (Latour, 1986).

Eisenstein (1979) drew on the introduction of the printing press to demonstrate how this works with regards to the perpetuation of identicalness. She argued that by printing identical copies of books on paper, they could be made immutable, and by printing multiple copies on paper they were rendered mobile, which allowed for the first time:

...a location where other places far away in space and time could be accumulated, presented to the eye, spread with no modification to other places and made available at other times.

(Latour, 1986, p.10)

Immutable mobiles not only facilitate the extension of networks but in doing so also reinforce the stability and ordering of existing ones. Drawing on this aspect of actor-

network theory facilitates potential examination of how degree ceremonies are extended across different institutions in different places. However, not all networks may be extended in an identical fashion. Previous studies have found that in some cases actor-networks are modified as they move to unpredictable places, and find ways to adapt and connect to their new surroundings (Mol and de Laet, 2000, Callon, 1986). This is explored further in relation to degree ceremonies in Chapters Six and Seven. In any case, it has been suggested that preparation and maintenance work plays a significant role in how networks are extended and cared for, as well as modified and changed (Denis and Pontille, 2010, 2011).

Denis and Pontille (2010) also draw attention to how preparation and maintenance work contributes to the construction of meaning. They hold that the placement and ordering of actants by experienced maintenance workers enables them to perform in ways that facilitate practice and encourage meaning making. How these processes contribute to the perpetuation of ceremonies, and whether they are involved in the ways international growth and marketing were embodied in degree ceremonies, is of interest to this study.

For actor-network theorists what is most important to a network is for actors to continue to interact (Latour, 2005). In the case of degree ceremonies, provided the actants involved continue to interact with each other in specific ways then the ceremony will appear stable from the outside. For example, a mace being carried in a procession amidst ceremonially clad people, accompanied by a piece of processional music on repetitive occasions over several years, is different to a mace being carried one day down a suburban street by a person in jeans and a t-shirt. Therefore actor-network theory looks at how actants are transformed through and by association with other actants, and Denis and Pontille (2010) look at how the placement, ordering and

care of these actants enables them to make these interactions and achieve the effects they do.

As in any endeavour that requires the compliance, co-operation and collaboration of many actors, degree ceremonies don't always run smoothly and controversies can arise. Controversies are of interest to actor-network theorists because of what and who are involved, what they do, and the effects they generate. Tracing and following these connections between controversies also allows for a more detailed record (Latour, 2005). Some of the controversies that emerged in this study are discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Based on the questions, concerns and gaps in existing knowledge identified in the first part of this thesis, drawing on the above features of actor-network theory and on the work developed by Denis and Pontille (2010, 2011) appears to represent the most suitable approach for researching degree ceremonies.

However, actor-network theory is not without its critics. One critique levelled at actor-network theory is that by describing nonhumans as 'actors' ascribes purpose, will and life to inanimate matter (Schaffer, 1991). However, the use of the term 'actors' in this thesis is not based on this interpretation and does not suggest, as some do, that all distinctions between humans and nonhumans should be abandoned (Amsterdamska, 1990). Collins and Yearley (1992) have suggested that nonhumans have no social life worth detailing, but this runs contrary to Fogelin and Schiffer (2015) who hold that objects can have life histories as well as humans. Instead, actor-network theory is presented here as a coherent framework of inquiry that has the capacity to incorporate nonhumans into social scientific accounts (Sayes, 2014). ANT allows for contextual sensitivity and makes no assumptions or promises beforehand about the generalisability of results. The dismissal of dualisms by actor-

network theorists draws criticism but, as mentioned earlier, this is not an ethical stance but an analytical one. Actor-network theory seeks to resist predictable definitions and processes laid down by many other theoretical interventions and, as such, Fenwick and Edwards (2010) have described it as ‘a way to intervene’. This characteristic means that the word ‘theory’ used in actor-network theory confuses its use, which is more methodological than theoretical (Sayes, 2014). It is not a theory led approach but instead prompts the researcher to think for themselves and follow the actors and their interactions wherever they lead, and describe what they do and how they do it (Latour, 2005). Actor-network theorists are therefore “in the business of description” (Latour, 2005, p. 147).

#### **4.3. How will Actor-Network Theory be applied in this Study?**

Drawing on the principle of generalised symmetry, social and material actants in degree ceremonies are given equal analytical privilege from the outset in this study. This does not assume that humans and nonhumans are the same or that they act and exert agency in the same way. Rather, applying this principle in the field and during analysis creates an opportunity to look at how both contribute to effects produced at degree ceremonies, including agentive ones.

A further principle drawn from actor-network theory and applied here is that actants can only achieve the effects they do through their interactions and networks of relations. This conceptual mechanism provides opportunities to look at how multiple actants involved in degree ceremonies are co-constituted in the achievement of effects and meanings. However, actants often require placing, ordering and maintaining in particular ways to achieve their effects. Therefore, by drawing on Denis and Pontille (2010, 2011) preparation and maintenance work that goes on in ceremonies can be

included. This somewhat invisible aspect of degree ceremonies has been largely neglected in the literature.

The framework of inquiry is thus designed to explore how degree ceremonies are constructed through actants and their networks, and how they are assembled and maintained (or not) in relation to other actants to produce various effects and meanings.

Underpinning this framework are two principles drawn from accounts about actor-network theory. The first requires an ontological view of the world that suggests it is constantly in 'flow', being made and re-made, even as much seems to stay in place (Law, 2001). This study similarly examines how degree ceremonies, despite being made anew each time, nevertheless manage to achieve the appearance of stability and familiarity leading to a perception that they are fixed and unchanging. The second concerns the capacity for actants in actor-network theory to be mobile, mutable or immutable; this provides opportunities to follow them to other spaces, places and times to describe how they are involved in the extension and perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time and space. In this way actor-network theory can localise 'global' forces of change to look at how growth and marketing in higher education are enacted locally through degree ceremonies. This second principle also provides for the re-distribution or extension of the local across different degree ceremonies by following actants wherever they lead, making it possible to trace the extension and perpetuation of degree ceremonies across higher education institutions. The emphasis throughout is on work happening within networks and how imaginary boundaries, such as those that establish features of society like higher education institutions, are assembled and maintained or not.

However, actor-network theory does not prescribe a set of methods to use in the field; rather the basic theoretical devices described above serve to ‘inform’ the framework of inquiry and analysis of this study (Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk, 2011).

The methods employed were similar to those often used in ethnography although this is not an ethnographic study. This distinction became apparent through the application of methods in the field and during analysis. For example, actor-network theorists do not pursue description for description’s sake; instead, the emphasis is to seek out specific activity associated with the assembling, disassembling and re-assembling of associations (Baiocchi, Graizbord and Rodríguez-Muñiz, 2013).

Furthermore, the analytical privilege that actor-network theory affords nonhuman actors, and the emphasis paid to co-constitutive relationships between human and nonhuman, is different to traditional ethnographic approaches that tend to be more people centred. While both approaches receive criticism about the limited transferability of their findings, both can achieve high internal validity that many large quantitative studies are unable to match (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982).

#### **4.4. Sampling: Initial, Planned and Final**

The final sample for this study comprised four public UK-based institutions, see Table 3 below. The diversity of the final sample reflects a number of differences that have the potential to impact on the perpetuation of degree ceremonies. These include differences in terms of the size and type of institutions included in the sample, their locations, and student populations they serve.

Rose University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded 1964, research-led, campus based university, located in North West England</li> </ul>
Colossus University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded 1969, online distance learning provider, main base located between Birmingham and London, England (UK based ceremonies only)</li> </ul>
Rock College of Further and Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded 1892, College of Further and Higher Education including provision of vocational courses along with apprenticeships, located North West England</li> <li>• 1993 achieved Associate College status with Rose University</li> </ul>
Hargreaves College of Further and Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded 1888, College of Further and Higher Education including provision of A level courses and apprenticeships, located in North West England</li> <li>• 1995 achieved Associate College status with Rose University</li> </ul>

Table 3: Final Sample

For example, Colossus University was by far the largest of the institutions in this sample with approximately 165,000 students who were scattered across the UK. As an online distance learning institution, it did not have regular face-to-face to contact with students, but did provide face-to-face degree ceremonies. Colossus University provided ceremonies across thirteen different geographical locations, unlike those hosted by Hargreaves College and Rock College which catered to their much smaller local student populations by hosting degree ceremonies at local venues. The significant differences in scale and geography between Colossus University and Hargreaves and Rock have the potential to raise different challenges for those involved in the preparation and delivery of ceremonies at these institutions which, in turn, may impact on how degree ceremonies are perpetuated. These institutions are also different in other ways. For example, as a university, Colossus has the authority to examine and award degrees to its own students, whereas Rock and Hargreaves rely on their associations with Rose University (and other institutions with the same authority) to be able to confer degrees on their students. Therefore, the perpetuation

of ceremonies at Hargreaves and Rock Colleges is closely intertwined with the participation of other higher education institutions.

With approximately 12,500 students, Rose University which is a highly ranked research-led institution caters to a much smaller student population than Colossus and, unlike Colossus, has regular face-to-face contact with its students. Different to the other three institutions in the sample, Rose University has the capacity to run ceremonies at its own venue on campus. Potentially, this provides Rose University with more control over the preparation and delivery of degree ceremonies, and hence their perpetuation. Rose University is also involved in degree ceremonies at other institutions, including, Hargreaves College, Rock College and two overseas institutions through a dual partnership arrangement with Hibiscus University in Malaysia and a franchise partnership arrangement with Lotus Institute in India. Rose University had limited involvement in the preparation and delivery of ceremonies held at its Associate Colleges, Hargreaves and Rock, and at its dual partner institution, Hibiscus University in Malaysia. These institutions organise their own ceremonies and senior officers from Rose University attend in order to confer degrees. Therefore, these institutions are involved in the perpetuation of their own ceremonies, albeit with a watchful partner at hand that has some power and authority over the proceedings. The situation is different with regard to Rose University's involvement with ceremonies held at Lotus Institute in India. At the time of this study, Rose University organisers were fully involved in the organisation and delivery of degree ceremonies there. In this instance, the perpetuation of ceremonies relies on Rose University organisers working alongside their franchise partners in India to prepare, maintain and deliver degree ceremonies. The potential perpetuation of degree ceremonies therefore relies on preparation and maintenance workers from two different cultural

backgrounds and settings working together where the lead partner is a western institution.

The diversity of the institutions included in the final sample also serves to highlight the different student populations they serve. For example, Hargreaves College and Rock College tend to attract large numbers of students from their local areas.

Traditionally, these have been areas of economic deprivation with low rates of access and participation in higher education. On the other hand, Colossus University is widely known for attracting mature students in work and those with caring responsibilities. Unlike Hargreaves and Rock, as a distance-learning provider, its students are widely dispersed across the UK. The perpetuation of ceremonies is therefore potentially more challenging for Colossus in terms of finding geographical locations that are convenient for its students. Colossus also aims, on occasion, to hold its ceremonies at the weekend in order to make it easier for mature students in work to attend. However, this potentially presents academics and senior officials with additional time commitments.

The student population at Rose University differs from the three other institutions, most notably in terms of its international nature. Out of an estimated 12,500 students, approximately 4,500 were international students during the period of this study. This potentially raises challenges for organisers responsible for the perpetuation of degree ceremonies at Rose University, who find themselves catering to a more internationally diverse audience than the other institutions in this sample. This also raises potential challenges for overseas students who wish to return to attend their graduation ceremony with family and friends, such as the costs involved and whether sufficient guest-tickets are available. Returning overseas students also present potential opportunities for local tourism and hospitality providers, as mentioned earlier in

Chapter Three (Shanka and Taylor, 2003). Students at Rose University’s overseas collaborative partners in Malaysia and India tend to be drawn from the local areas in which these institutions are situated.

Choosing a sample for this study was a purposive and pragmatic process. Purposive, because I wanted to examine degree ceremonies at higher education institutions outside the USA since this is an under researched area. Pragmatic, because it made sense to look for institutions that could be reached relatively easily in the UK, particularly because I wanted to be close to the day to day workings of degree ceremonies during the year as well as the public materialisations of them.

However, in practice not all the research sites were chosen at the same time or known beforehand. During the period of this research snowballing and purposive sampling methods were utilised, and the sampling strategy was adapted twice. First, to accommodate institutions found to have partnership arrangements with the initial entry point institution, and second, when two institutions were removed from the sample because direct access and permissions were not gained. These developments are represented in Table 3a below.

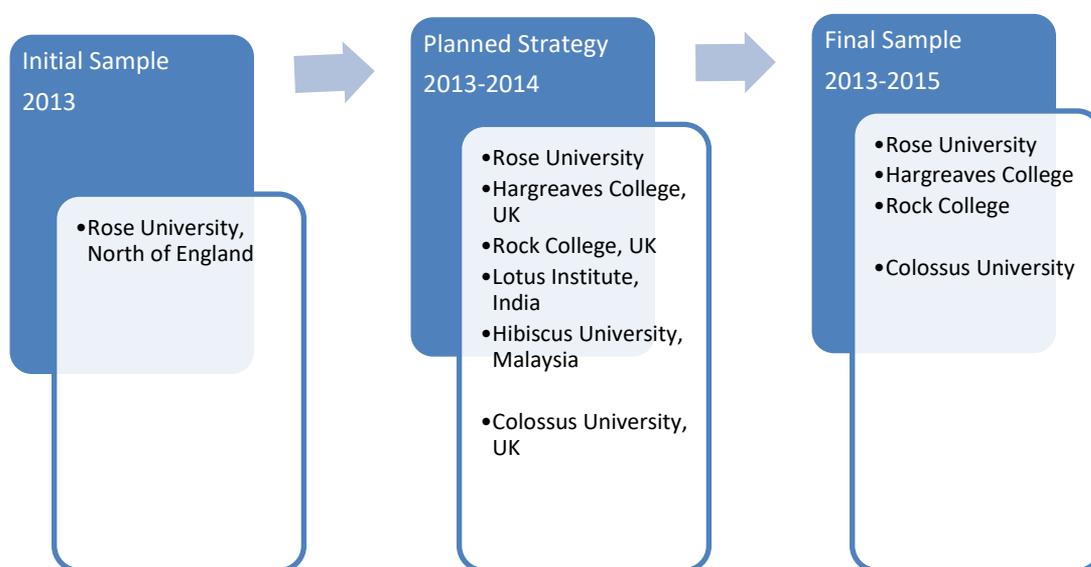


Table 3a: Initial, Planned and Final Sample (2013-2015)

Rose University in the North of England was chosen as an initial entry point because of its potential to provide frequent access to ceremonies and the back room workings of them due to its convenient location. Furthermore, Rose University had additional advantages because of its association with different periods of growth in higher education, as explained in the following section.

#### 4.4.1. How Growth in Higher Education is related to Sampling in this Study

Founded in the 1960s at a time of significant growth in the UK, Rose University went on to establish relationships with a number of local colleges by validating teacher training qualifications and awarding Education related degrees. Graduating students from the colleges were awarded degrees at Rose University degree ceremonies. Over time, the number of graduating students increased and there was a commensurate increase in the number of ceremonies held at Rose University.

In 1992, the higher education sector in the UK experienced another period of growth when polytechnics were awarded university status. This period coincides with sampling in this study because two of the local colleges became Associate Colleges of Rose University: Rock College in 1993, and Hargreaves College in 1995. Both are included in the final sample for this study. Another college with previous links to Rose attained university status and set up its own degree ceremonies, which initially reduced the number of ceremonies held at Rose, demonstrating how such institutional partnerships can affect degree ceremonies.

In Chapter Three, the extent and distribution of global growth in the past ten to fifteen years was described and this pattern is reflected in Rose University's growth during the same period. First, through the establishment of overseas collaborative

partnerships and second, through student and staff mobility which has resulted in a more internationally diverse staff and student body.

At the time of this study Rose University officers and organisers were involved in degree ceremonies at two of their overseas partner institutions. The first was Hibiscus University in Malaysia which became an academic partner to Rose in 2006. At Hibiscus University, students completing an honours degree programme are awarded dual degrees and two certificates during ceremonies making them graduates of both institutions. The second, The Lotus Institute in India, became a franchise partner in 2009 and students completing their degree courses receive a Rose University degree. There were further signs of international expansion at Rose University, but at the time of this study no degree ceremonies had been undertaken in conjunction with these emerging arrangements. Research studies about how such overseas relationships are configured, managed and work in practice are limited, although there has been some recent interest in this area, mentioned earlier in Chapter Three.

A snowballing approach (Bryman, 2008) was employed at Rose University to gain further access to degree ceremonies at Hargreaves College, Rock College, Hibiscus University and Lotus Institute. Access and formal permissions were granted for Rose, Hargreaves and Rock, but disappointingly not for Hibiscus and Lotus. There were practical and financial constraints associated with accessing the overseas sites, although documents, photographs and DVDs of these ceremonies were shared by organisers at Rose. Interviews were also undertaken with organisers and senior officers from Rose University who had attended these overseas ceremonies. Despite asking for direct contact with staff at these institutions, the requests were never acted upon, and not wanting to compromise the breadth and depth of access that had been achieved at Rose I chose not to approach them directly. Therefore, data presented in

the second part of this thesis that relates to these two overseas institutions must be treated with a degree of caution, because the sample represents a western mind-set, and reflects data that was chosen to be shared by organisers at Rose. These institutions are described as subsidiary institutions in relation to this study as a result. A purposive sampling approach (Bryman, 2008) was used to gain access to degree ceremonies organised by Colossus University, a distance learning provider in the UK. Therefore, the final sample for this study included Rose University, Hargreaves College, Rock College and Colossus University. Further background information about these institutions and their degree ceremonies can be found in Appendix One. Additional background information has also been provided in relation to the two subsidiary institutions overseas that feature in data presented in the second part of this thesis.

#### 4.4.2. Relative Merits of the Final Sample

There were several advantages associated with the final sample in relation to the perpetuation of ceremonies, not least because of the extended access gained to Rose University's network of degree ceremonies. This network included different types of public and private higher education institutions which reflect the heterogeneous landscape of higher education described in Chapter Three, and hence provided opportunities to investigate how growth and marketing were embodied in degree ceremonies in these conditions.

The decision to include Colossus was based on the university's experience and practice as a distance learning provider. As more higher education institutions move to offer online degree programmes, blended programmes and utilise technological developments to enhance and develop opportunities for distance learning, it seemed

appropriate to consider how a higher education institution that has a great deal of experience in this field organises degree ceremonies for students rarely seen face to face.

Including Colossus University had another distinct advantage. With a much larger dispersed student population it afforded opportunities to examine how a distance learning provider accommodated large numbers of graduating students at degree ceremonies compared to the large-scale ceremonies held by universities in the USA, described earlier in Chapters Two and Three.

Other degree ceremonies were attended in person and online between 2013 and 2015. These included attendance at Worcester University, Edinburgh University (virtual attendance as an avatar) and the University of Bologna in Italy, and observations of online ceremonies hosted by the following universities: York, Kent, Essex, Sussex, East Anglia, Warwick, Falmouth, Oxford, St. Andrews, and Charles University, Prague. There were also visits to the University and Museum at St Andrews, and the Bodleian and Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford.

#### **4.5. How and Why Multiple Methods were used in the Collection of Data**

The decision to use multiple methods to collect data was driven by the framework of inquiry and the complexity of the field being studied. For example, whilst interviews provide a means of accessing what social actors do, and how and why they do it, they are not an appropriate method for studying nonhuman participants. Therefore, observations, participant observations, photographs, documents and DVDs were used and these methods also afforded opportunities to revisit both nonhuman and social actors during the analysis. Accessing data generated by different methods in conjunction did bear some fruit, as discussed later in Chapter Eight. Table 4 below

summarises the methods employed and how they were distributed amongst the sample.

Tables 4 and 5 both demonstrate that in terms of access achieved and data collected, Rose University constitutes a primary research site and the others in the sample secondary research sites. A multiple comparative case study approach was chosen in order to draw attention to the network flows and connections between degree ceremonies held at these institutions as well as the differences. Having Rose University as a primary research site and the other case studies as secondary enabled a fuller analysis and the drawing of comparisons and contrasts which serve to highlight elements that would otherwise go unnoticed if just one site was studied.

	<i>Rose University</i>	<i>Hargreaves College</i>	<i>Rock College</i>	<i>Colossus University</i>
<i>Observations</i>	√	√	√	√
<i>Participant Observation</i>	√			
<i>Semi-structured Interviews</i>	√	√		√
<i>Documents</i>	√	√	√	√
<i>Photographs</i>	√	√	√	√
<i>DVDs</i>	√			

Table 4: Methods employed to collect data 2013-2015

#### 4.5.1. Multiple Methods Employed

Observations were undertaken in different settings throughout this study which highlighted the nuances between them and influenced how, what and where data were collected. Observations differed depending on whether ceremonies were being

attended in person, watched online or via DVD, or being streamed live on campus or via an institution's web site. Line of sight was restricted to where cameras were pointed at all observations except those attended in person. Observations of offstage areas could only be accessed in person and with permission of organisers, and those overseeing them. Access was gained to all offstage areas at Rose, Hargreaves and Rock, and to the student robing and photography areas at the Colossus ceremonies. However, access does not finish after entry to the field has been achieved (Bryman, 2008). For example, ongoing access to offstage stage areas was developed over time by getting to know people working in these areas. When personnel changed or a new area requiring access emerged then this necessitated the development of new relationships. In this way gaining access was an ongoing feature throughout this study. Organisers acted as gatekeepers and granted permission to take photographs in offstage areas.

The use of photography in this study reflects a growing interest in the use of visual images in social scientific research (Bryman, 2008, Scott, 1990). Pink (2009) suggests this is culturally situated and influenced by a predilection for the visual sense in western cultures. However, photography should be treated with some caution (Scott, 1990). Previous studies have found that photographs can be interpreted in multiple ways and fashion a particular version of events (Scott, 1990, Blaikie, 2001). The advice is to use them in conjunction with other sources of data which is how they were used here, and which suited the framework of inquiry being used.

As a participant observer at Rose University I did not take photographs or observation notes whilst seated on stage or acting as an assistant marshal. Why taking notes and photographs might be deemed inappropriate is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Therefore, notes were taken immediately after ceremonies and written up in the evening while events were still fresh in my mind.

A large amount of documentary data was collected during this study, including: programme guides, files of correspondence, ceremonial scripts, emergency procedures, marshals' scripts, leaflets for students and their supporters as well as email correspondence. According to the framework of inquiry being employed these documents were also actants in the study, and potentially involved in the perpetuation of ceremonies and embodiment of growth and marketing. This was borne in mind throughout the coding and analysis.

Diaries were kept throughout to record my entry to the field, daily observations, reflections, areas of interest or controversies at each of the research sites. Not everything could be captured, therefore the diaries also reflect choices made about what to record, and why. On reflection, these choices appear to have been influenced by the framework of inquiry being employed, and a rare piece of advice given to would be actor-network theorists:

Actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it

(Latour, 1999a, p.20)

Using these methods over time to collect data, and because so much is repetitively prepared and performed at degree ceremonies, it was possible to build up a substantive picture of the preparation, maintenance and performance of ceremonies at Rose University. Collecting data at the secondary sites created potential for comparisons to be made across sites, and for actants from Rose University to be followed to secondary sites at partner institutions.

#### 4.5.2. Summary of Data Collected and how it was Managed

Table 5 below summarises the type and distribution of data collected according to institutions included in this sample. A more comprehensive and detailed breakdown of data collected based on the sample and other institutions during the period of this study can be found in Appendix Four.

	Interviews	Photographs	Programme Guides	DVDs	Diaries
<i>Primary Research Site</i>					
<b>Rose University (UK)</b>	24	1873 +	6	2	6
<i>Secondary Research Sites</i>					
<b>Hargreaves College (UK)</b>	1	83	1	0	1
<b>Rock College (UK)</b>	0	280	1	0	1
<b>Colossus University (UK)</b>	1	97	1	0	1
<i>Subsidiary Institutions</i>					
<b>Hibiscus University Malaysia</b>	0	6 +	1	1	1
<b>Lotus Institute India</b>	0	4 +	1	1	1

Table 5: Summary of Different Types of Data Collected at Primary and Secondary Research Sites between July 2013 and December 2015<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Not included in the Table above are the following additional sources of data;

- Review of the first fifty years of Rose University Programme Guides for Degree Ceremonies which are held in the institution's archives.
- Documentation related to the ceremonies at Rose University including: ceremony scripts, emergency procedures, Marshals' notes, seating plans, excel spreadsheets for seating at each ceremony, email correspondence, and photographs of historical correspondence held in the ceremonies office at Rose University and the University's archives.
- Photographs of documents from a file held by J. Wippell & Co. Ltd. (Robemakers at Rose University during the period of this study).
- Photographs of documents held at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, in file UR6/NU/1, file 1 dated 28.11.64.

Much of the data collected did not make it into the thesis. One of the features of actor-network theory is that it is impossible to know at the outset, or for that matter during the period of data collection, what will become useful and what will not. It was only after data were managed, organised and coded that themes began to emerge. ATLAS-ti was used to organise and manage the large data set collected. One of the drawbacks of managing large quantities of data using traditional methods is that once it has been coded and highlighted manually it can often be time-consuming revisiting it. ATLAS-ti was used to avoid this difficulty and to assemble as much data as possible in one place so that it could be accessed, revisited and utilised in a speedier fashion. As computer-aided qualitative data analysis software, ATLAS-ti does not analyse data but instead supports the process of analysis. The researcher is tasked with using the software to support their own research design. There have been few studies about how this is done and some have urged caution in its use suggesting that it reduces data to fragments and so loses the richness that can be attained through examining full pieces of data (Friese, 2012, Bryman, 2008). However, ATLAS-ti is particularly suitable for analysis informed by actor-network theory which requires different actants to be followed to see how they come together to create different effects. One of the aims of actor-network theory is to demonstrate complexity and there have been few who have questioned the potential of this software to enable qualitative researchers to develop and manage large, complex data sets. Nevertheless, the note of caution was heeded and transcripts and documents were read twice in their entirety.

Data collected in this study were loaded onto ATLAS-ti and the coding was informed by the framework of inquiry. Actants and their interactions were identified and coded (e.g. 'mace' and 'macebearer') as well as more complex connections according to

where these actants featured in ceremonies. For example, ‘mace’ and ‘macebearer’ were also coded under ‘ceremonial processions’. This enabled me to examine which actants were involved in ceremonial processions and to look at all data related to mace and macebearers. As more data were loaded, codes were further broken down to facilitate ease of access by including categorical codes (e.g. according to institution) or by clustering human actors, nonhuman actors, staging, and documents. Therefore, coding was not predetermined but emerged as I loaded and read the raw data. This is because the aim was not to create themes according to a top down theoretical route but rather a bottom up approach that focused on how degree ceremonies were prepared, maintained and performed by the social and material actants involved. Categories of analysis were established after actors had made connections in the field. Codes were established for each actor and for particular moments during the preparation and performance of ceremonies. This provided the opportunity to follow actors and their interactions at different points. Throughout this process I kept a diary on ATLAS-ti recording choices and reasons for setting up codes or merging others. I found that the more specific the code was the more useful it turned out to be. More details about the coding process and a copy of the coding list can be found in Appendices Two and Three.

#### **4.6. Analysis of data**

The framework of inquiry driving this study allows for complex relations between actants, and how they are prepared and maintained, to be illuminated through the production of thick descriptions. The methods employed to gather data were aligned to accumulate data capable of reflecting this complexity and including the material as well as social aspects of degree ceremonies. The aim then was to use these descriptions to consider how marketing and growth were embodied in degree

ceremonies or not, and how these events were extended and perpetuated. There were three main phases of analysis which are discussed below.

#### 4.6.1. Analysis: Phase I

The first stage examined how actants were involved in the construction of degree ceremonies and which other actants they associated with. Attention was paid throughout to whether actants contributed to the perpetuation of ceremonies, or if they were connected in any way to conditions of growth and marketing described in Chapter Three. Applying the framework of inquiry meant consideration of whether and how material actants exerted agency in gatherings and how the material was constituted by other actants through the interviews (Sayes, 2014). Word documents were produced to capture data relating to specific actants and themes were identified. For example, the document capturing data related to the code 'coat of arms' revealed that coats of arms were evident at Rose and Colossus but that logos were used at Hargreaves and Rock. It also highlighted how coats of arms were associated with other actors such as programme guides at Rose and Colossus and how they featured on the chairs used on stage at their ceremonies. However, it also highlighted differences. At Colossus the coat of arms seen on a large screen behind the seating on stage was different to the coat of arms on the chairs on stage. By following this thread I could establish that Colossus had updated its coat of arms because the technological symbols used on its first had become outdated. It had reverted to a more traditional coat of arms without technological devices to withstand rapid changes in technology. After working through the data, a short summary was written to highlight the key details. This stage also produced questions and themes that required further investigation particularly regarding how actants were prepared, placed and ordered.

#### 4.6.2. Analysis: Phase II

During the second stage of analysis ATLAS-ti was used. A question would be posed such as, ‘how are staff lined up before ceremonies?’, or ‘how do students take their seats at ceremonies?’ This question would be typed into a memo on ATLAS-ti and the data explored using the query tool. Notes were recorded in the memo during the search to highlight themes to return to later or more detailed questions for future searches. A word document was open alongside to capture any data that related to the question being posed. Thick descriptions were written in response to questions posed and a substantive body of work was produced. Not all the content of these descriptions were used largely due to the confines of the word limit here; the third phase of analysis helped to inform which data were utilised.

#### 4.6.3. Analysis: Phase III

A more focused approach was used during the third phase. The aim was to use the thick descriptions produced during Phase II to determine how growth and marketing were embodied in degree ceremonies, and if and how they were extended and perpetuated.

The analysis showed that gaining insight into the perpetuation of ceremonies required more knowledge about the actants and how they were involved in ceremonies.

Furthermore, it was apparent that preparation and maintenance work played a significant role in how degree ceremonies were perpetuated. However, the analysis also drew attention to the vulnerability of degree ceremonies when changes are introduced, and how these assemblages have capacity for change; particularly the capacity to embody global changes such as growth and marketing at a local level described in Chapter Three.

#### **4.7. Ethical Considerations**

Once interviews had been transcribed and read twice the original recordings were deleted. This complied with the ethical arrangements that were approved by the Ethics Committee at Lancaster University. Confidentiality of interview participants was assured wherever possible by attributing categories and numbers to participants. However, some ceremonial officers and senior officers were aware that it might be difficult to entirely mask their identity because of the public nature of their role in degree ceremonies. All were happy with this caveat and granted permission for their interviews to be used, knowing that they could withdraw or ask to look at the transcripts at any time. Pseudonyms were used for higher education institutions to add a little extra protection to interview respondents. Other institutions associated with the origins of material objects were named in order to provide references for future researchers.

The use of photography in this study conformed to the statement of ethical practice provided by the British Sociological Association which was accessed through their website in 2013 and revisited each year. Permission was requested before photographing individuals and I ensured they understood the parameters of my research. Close-up shots of individuals were avoided and in offstage areas I took an overt approach which included the gatekeeper at Rose emailing all support staff to inform them about the research. Permission to use photographs provided by various institutions in this study have been appropriately attributed to the owner of the copyright.

#### **4.8. Overview**

Applying a constructionist approach to study the perpetuation of degree ceremonies may at first sight appear paradoxical; constructionist approaches do not tend to go hand-in-hand with studies about continuity. However, the perpetuation of ceremonies is seen here as an effect that is made and re-made and that requires explanation.

Unlike previous contemporary studies about degree ceremonies, this study seeks to give nonhumans as well as humans agentic capacity to contribute to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies. However, these actants are only able to achieve the effects they do because of careful preparation and maintenance work. Surprisingly, this aspect of degree ceremonies has been treated superficially in previous studies. The framework of inquiry developed to facilitate these interests draws on actor-network theory and on work developed by Denis and Pontille (2010, 2011).

Drawing on the theoretical devices of generalised symmetry and of immutable and mutable mobiles used in actor-network theory provides analytical capacity to follow human and nonhuman actants through different degree ceremonies, to explore their involvement in the extension and perpetuation of degree ceremonies in different locations. Drawing on Denis and Pontille (*ibid*) extends the framework to focus on how preparation and maintenance work informs the perpetuation of degree ceremonies in association with actants.

Employing multiple methods to collect data at four research sites in the UK generated a large and varied data set to comprise one intensive and three smaller case studies.

The majority of data was organised and coded using ATLAS-ti. Data analysis proceeded in three main phases to result in thick descriptions about degree ceremonies held at the four sites included in this sample. These descriptions were used to

examine how degree ceremonies were perpetuated, and how growth and marketing were embodied through actants, their interactions, placement, ordering and maintenance at degree ceremonies.

The results are presented in Part II, in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. These chapters have been designed to build on one another to develop a familiarity with the actants involved in ceremonies, how they are prepared, placed, ordered and maintained in the run-up to ceremonies, how this work goes on during the performance of ceremonies, and what happens when things go wrong.

# PART II

## **Chapter 5     Actors, their Networks and Associations**

Earlier in Chapter Two it was noted that previous studies of degree ceremonies, with the exception of Magolda (2003), have largely taken for granted the material features of these occasions, often relegating them to the background context, rather than inquiring further about their contribution. One of the aims of this study is to demonstrate how material features of degree ceremonies are involved in the perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time and space. However, in order to be able to do this, not all material features of degree ceremonies could be included. With so many actants involved in ceremonies, carrying out an in-depth examination of how they were all involved, or not, would have proved impossible within the limitations of this thesis. Therefore, a choice had to be made about which actants to include and which to exclude. The decision to focus on ceremonial mace and academic dress worn by senior officers was driven by the apparent resilience of these particular actants over time, and because they are surprisingly under researched. This does not intimate that these actants are more important or more powerful than other actants, but that they provide an opportunity to fill a logical next step in the existing literature about degree ceremonies. Other actants have been considered in earlier papers submitted for this PhD or for publication (Wearden, 2015). For example, a previous paper submitted for this PhD explored the effects produced by a more contemporary actants in degree ceremonies, which demonstrated the agentive effects that cameras produced through their interactions and relations with other actants. By focusing, in particular, on ceremonial mace and academic dress worn by senior officers, the aim is to address a gap in the literature about these actants and their long standing repetitive inclusion in degree ceremonies.

The analysis and presentation considers the different types of growth in higher education discussed in Chapter Three, which is also reflected in the sample. Further consideration is given to whether and, if so, how these actants are entangled in marketing activity at ceremonies.

The framework of inquiry and methodology provides capacity to trace actants as they enact effects and associations through their own networks and in interaction with other actants (Callon, 1986) or develop iterations of them at different institutions.

This chapter demonstrates how ceremonial mace and academical dress rely on their own networks, associations and interactions to generate their effects at ceremonies.

By examining how they are perpetuated across degree ceremonies at different institutions the analysis will highlight the culturally situated nature of these actants, their stabilising effects and potential to cause disruption.

### **5.1. Actors with Historical Associations**

In Chapter Two, seven features of inception ceremonies were described (Davies, 2009, Price, 2005, Wieruszowski, 1966) that were also evident in the degree ceremonies in this study. These features are: ceremonial mace, bedels, prescribed academical dress, role of Chancellor as presiding officer, academics, students, and festivities after ceremonies. The historical associations of ceremonial mace, bedels and academical dress were briefly discussed in Chapter Two in relation to how they reflected and enacted continuity and change. Ceremonial mace and academical dress are now considered in more detail in relation to different types of growth, and marketing activity in higher education at the time of this study.

## **5.2. Ceremonial Mace in Contemporary Higher Education Settings**

Ceremonial mace were used at all the ceremonies in this study and online searches demonstrated their widespread use across many higher education institutions around the world. Not only have mace been used repetitively for centuries at ancient institutions, they also appear to have been introduced at new institutions entering the sector which implies they are involved in the extension and perpetuation of degree ceremonies. This finding suggests that mace contribute to the expansion of ceremonies in relation to growth occurring in the higher education sector, referred to more broadly by Thrift et al (2014). This chapter firstly considers mace as actants with their own networks, associations and effects before moving to discuss mace in the context of growth.

Two institutions in this study, Rose and Colossus, had their own ceremonial mace while Hargreaves and Rock did not. The two subsidiary institutions overseas had also acquired mace and used them at degree ceremonies. The following section describes the use of ceremonial mace and how their own network associations contribute to the construction of meaning in degree ceremonies. Attention is also paid to how these actants are involved in the extension and perpetuation of ceremonies, and whether they are implicated in the enactment of growth or marketing. Greater emphasis is given to Rose University as the primary research site.

### **5.2.1. The Networks, Associations and Effects generated by Mace**

Four respondents explicitly commented upon the importance of mace to the degree ceremony. All were closely involved in the organisation and delivery of degree ceremonies. Observation notes suggest that the ceremonial mace at Rose University drew attention in a way that other more mundane objects did not:

Once I took the mace out of the box and started to examine it closely I noticed that it drew attention and generated interest from passers-by, people stopped to chat, one asked “what are you doing with our mace?” Others were interested to know more about it, and another member of staff stopped to say that guests at degree ceremonies had asked her about various things like the mace and she didn’t have any answers.

Observation Notes: Examination of ceremonial mace, Ceremonies Office, University House, Rose University, 4.9.13.

However, a senior official at Rose University less involved in the organisation and delivery of ceremonies provided an alternative view:

...at Rose it [mace] comes on at the end [Note: It is on stage throughout] you don't see it in the ceremony, unless it's somewhere to our side where we don't see it... I don't notice that part, I notice the people bowing, so I suppose it's the people, I don't notice all the paraphernalia.

Senior Officer 7, Rose University, 11.6.14

The mace is on stage throughout Rose ceremonies. This response suggests that not everyone notices mace in degree ceremonies, and that they can be taken for granted and seen as part of the background, rather than as constitutive actors. Other respondents at Rose University said they didn’t know anything about the mace but were curious about its use and purpose. This in turn has a methodological impact on the collection of data about mace through interviews, and may cast light on why material features such as mace have been less evident in previous studies, and neglected more generally.

### 5.2.2. Rose University’s Ceremonial Mace

At the beginning of this study in 2013, enquiry suggested little was known at a senior level, or by organisers or staff in the archives at Rose University about how Rose

University had originally acquired its silver mace, or where it had been made (see fig. 4 below). Carried at all Rose University degree ceremonies since the first one held on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1965, it is also carried at degree ceremonies held by its institutional partners the two associate colleges based in the UK, Hargreaves and Rock. Repetitive use of the mace over time at Rose University generates a sense of continuity and a connection with past ceremonies.



Fig. 4: Rose University Ceremonial Mace © Rose University

The archives at Rose University mentioned that a gift of silver had been made to the university upon its foundation by the University of Oxford, but provided no further details. As part of this research, inquiries were made at the Bodleian Library in

Oxford, where a file was found containing information about how Rose University had acquired its mace and who made it.<sup>8</sup>

The correspondence in the file described how the University of Oxford presented Rose University with a silver mace in 1964 to celebrate its foundation as a new University. The mace is a copy [though not an exact copy] of the Faculty of Arts stave made in 1743 which is carried in ceremonies at the University of Oxford. Consequently, the Rose University mace symbolises a direct association with the University of Oxford.

Garrard & Co. Ltd in London were commissioned to make the mace in 1964 and the first Vice Chancellor of Rose University, Professor Sir Charles Carter, travelled to collect it in September 1965. Other new universities opening at the time were similarly offered the choice of a mace, chair, painting or piece of silver as a gift from the University of Oxford to celebrate their foundation. As a result, four additional mace of the same design were produced.

Correspondence in the file also highlighted a difference in terminology when referring to mace. Use of the word 'stave' instead of mace at the University of Oxford is related to the university's authority as an independent body having been founded *ex-consuetudine* (by custom) thus reinforcing that it does not owe its allegiance to an external authority (Wells, H. 1906, p.95). Universities granted university status through an external authority for example, via Royal Charter, Papal Bull, or an Act of

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<sup>8</sup> File: UR6/NU/1, file1, dated 23.11.64, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Parliament, use the term mace instead. Therefore, use of the term 'stave' at the University of Oxford serves to distinguish it from most other universities.

This section illustrates how mace are involved in perpetuating a sense of continuity through their repetitive use and that this creates a sense of stability over time, reinforcing the suggestion that durable materials have the capacity to temporally stabilise gatherings (Callon and Latour, 1981, Sayes, 2014). On the other hand, use of the Rose mace at Hargreaves and Rock College ceremonies demonstrates how mace can also be dynamic, and mobile. In this instance, the use of Rose University's mace reinforced the university's status and authority to award degrees, distinguishing it from the Colleges that did not have the same discretion. A point reinforced by one of the respondents at Rose as follows:

The significance of the mace in ceremonial terms is that it confers the authority of the university or conveys the authority of the university to confer degrees, it's very much representing the institution. I haven't done any research into any other historical origins of the mace but I know that it plays an important role and we have a stand on stage, on top of the University's Charter so clearly if the Mace wasn't brought up onto the platform and put on the stand, although the audience might not realise, we would be very aware that there was something missing from the ceremony, that we had made a mistake and that would be unacceptable.

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13

The origins of the mace, its differentiation from the original 'stave', and its use at Rose and associated colleges demonstrate its role in the perpetuation of degree ceremonies and the capacity of mace to differentiate between institutions.

### 5.2.3. Mace in relation to Different Types of Growth in Higher Education

The analysis highlighted how different types of growth occurring in higher education at particular times was associated with the sample in this, see Table 6 below.

<i>In relation to Mace</i>	<i>Growth in UK 1960s</i>	<i>Growth in UK 1990s</i>	<i>Increasing Student Enrolment &amp; Mobility 1990s – early 2000s</i>	<i>Overseas Dual Degree Partnership Malaysia 2006</i>	<i>Overseas Franchise Partnership India 2009</i>
<i>Rose University</i>	Gift upon foundation from University of Oxford, and a close copy of original Faculty of Arts stave used at Oxford	Rose mace transported to Hargreaves and Rock ceremonies	Growth through local partnerships with colleges increased number of ceremonies at Rose. Numbers dropped when colleges converted to university status and acquired their own mace	Partner acquires own mace made from local indigenous materials, and bears Hibiscus's traditional coat of arms granted by College of Arms in London	Rose mace expensive to insure and transport therefore Rose supported partner in acquisition and design of similar mace, though of different dimensions and with Sanskrit inscription
<i>Hargreaves College</i>		Rose mace carried at Hargreaves ceremonies	As number of ceremonies increase, Rose mace increasingly required.		
<i>Rock College</i>		Rose mace carried at Rock ceremonies	As number of ceremonies increase, Rose mace increasingly required		
<i>Colossus University</i>	Gift upon foundation from Imperial Metal Industries. Titanium Bears coat of arms on base		Copy of original mace made in stainless steel to manage large number of ceremonies		

Table 6: The Perpetuation of Mace in relation to Different Types of Growth in Higher Education

It appears that new mace are made as new institutions open. However, institutions without authority to award and confer degrees in the UK rely on mace being brought to their ceremonies by more established partners that do have such authority. This is more difficult when partners are based overseas. In this study, the costs of insuring and transporting the Rose mace to ceremonies in India resulted in Rose supporting their local partner in the acquisition of a mace that was of a similar design to their own. This locally-made replacement was different to the original Rose mace in terms of its size and materials used. It also bore a Sanskrit inscription which reflected the local identity of the institution in India. In contrast, Hibiscus University in Malaysia had authority to award and confer degrees and they acquired their own mace, using local indigenous materials and craftsmanship that again reflected the local identity of the institution but which also bore a coat of arms that had been granted to the university by the College of Arms in London. Interviews with organisers and senior officers at Rose indicated that the acquisition of mace by their overseas partners had been demand led rather than being imposed upon them.

The introduction of mace to ceremonies at new institutions generated demand for someone to carry it; thus the role of bedel was perpetuated alongside mace. Bedels wore prescribed attire. At Rose this comprised top hat and tails with white gloves, at Colossus a suit with long jacket and gloves, and at the remaining institutions black academical robes or, in the case of Hibiscus University in Malaysia, a red robe.

### **5.3. Academical Dress**

Earlier in Chapter Two academical dress was shown to be adaptable and capable of reflecting forces of change occurring in higher education in the past. However, significant international growth in recent years make it more difficult to keep track of

how academical dress is changing or being adapted in countries outside the USA and UK. Contemporary sources of literature about degree ceremonies have given scant attention to the robes, caps and hoods worn by academics and students, and even less to those worn by senior officials of institutions. The data presented here aims to contribute to these areas. First, by presenting data related to the effects and associations that academical dress generated, then by highlighting the specific effects generated by the academic attire worn by senior officers, before moving on to illuminate how the culturally situated nature of academical dress and perceptions of 'quality' were evident through collaborative institutional partnerships.

### 5.3.1. Associations and Effects Generated by Academical Dress

Academic dress generated several different associations and effects across the degree ceremonies in this study. There was a general consensus that because academic dress was different to normal everyday wear, it conveyed that something special or out of the ordinary was taking place.

Most people choose to wear academic dress, it's not compulsory, but most people choose to wear it because it's, again, it's sort of what's makes it different really.

Organiser, Colossus University, 24.9.13

Whether this would be the same at universities where academic dress is worn daily or more regularly remains to be seen, but the data presented here reflect institutions where daily wear of academic attire has diminished. Wearing academical dress to degree ceremonies was linked by one respondent to the enactment of symbolic change:

...it [academical dress] was one of the things that marked it out as a special day, it was the symbolism around your right to wear that basically, and that's a very important indication that something has changed, so in a way it's something very symbolic and that is why the ceremony is important because it allows that to be played out.

Senior Officer 3, Rose University, 9.6.14

In this instance wearing academical dress was associated with the right of the student to wear it, but also with a change in status. The latter point resonates with ritual literature about rites of passage that speak of transformation (Van Gennep, 1960). Academical dress worn by ceremonial officers also appeared to generate a change in circumstance although in different ways, as follows:

...you just go straight in and take your cloak off and then I come back in and I'm just like anyone else really, but I suppose if you hung around you would get your photograph taken by quite a lot of people.

Ceremonial Officer, Rose University, 25.3.14

Wearing ceremonial attire appeared to make this respondent feel different because when they took it off they referred to 'being just like anyone else'. It seemed to confer a sense of transformation for this respondent. Two other ceremonial officers at Rose suggested that wearing the red robes associated with the role of marshal at ceremonies conferred some authority and importance which helped them to negotiate crowded spaces at the venue as well as making it easier for students to identify them. The latter association would be useful for those marshals responsible for guiding staff and students through ceremonies.

One interview respondent observed how academical dress had been related to a decline in attendance by academics but could offer no reason for this at Rose ceremonies which had led a previous organiser to introduce non-academic members of staff into the procession and on stage who wore black bachelor's robes but with no hood. They said the resulting effect was to make the platform less colourful, because the black bachelor's gowns were not as colourful as the doctoral gowns worn by academics which reflected where they had taken their highest degree.

Academical dress also generated associations across institutions,

I think what you tend to see is that the more established universities, you actually tend to see a certain convergence in the style of the robes, so I've actually seen institutions with robes very similar to Rose's – I think that reflects the fact that they've shared the same robemaker over the years so they will have designed robes in particular colours. What you notice is the consistency around the use of gold braiding, around what they call the olivets ... the braiding on the arms and on the front. So even at other Russell Group or 1994 institutions erm it might not be red, it might be dark green, or it might be royal blue or it might be black even, but what they'll all have is that rich damask material with gold braid and olivets in a very similar style erm I think what you then tend to see with a less established institution, they might be a less ornate version often or they might be more ornate, because they've started from scratch and they are very eager to demonstrate their university credentials, so it can be a bit variable but I think, I wouldn't say it's a pecking order as such I think that all universities want to demonstrate their senior officers robes in the same kind of quality.

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13

There were examples of how different universities adopted similar styles of dress for their most senior officers, specifically at Rose, Colossus and Hibiscus, but the similarities were less evident at associate colleges in the UK, and at Rose University's franchise partner in India. Therefore, based on this sample, the academic attire worn by senior officers in part reflects an institution's authority to award and confer degrees.

A senior officer at Rose recalled their experience working at an institution elsewhere in the UK that had just been granted university status:

...this goes back to the point I was making about [previous university] when you are a new institution you try to create rituals around the ceremonies which make you seem like established universities.

Senior Officer 4, Rose University, 24.6.14

This suggests that academical dress worn by senior officers is associated with generating the effect of authority, and helps new institutions develop their external image as a university.

### 5.3.2. How Academical Dress contributes to the Assemblage of Hierarchies

Research about academical dress has tended to focus on attire related to academic achievement. There have been few studies about effects generated by academic attire worn by senior officials of higher education institutions. Yet attire worn by senior officers in this study was not only more distinctive than that worn by their academic colleagues and students but also appeared to assemble hierarchies in similar and different ways. A review of academic dress worn by senior officers at Rose University established how these garments contributed through their design, colour,

embellishments, and who wore them to ceremonial occasions, for example see fig. 5 below.



Fig. 5: Construction of Institutional Hierarchy through Robes worn by Three Senior Officers at Rose University (Clockwise from left: Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

All three robes in fig. 5 are made of the same red cotton viscose damask of the St Margaret design. The facings on two of the robes are gold in colour, and the third is faced in silver which indicates a lower rank than the first two. The width of the facings is also significant; the higher the rank, the wider the facings. However, the most noticeable difference between the robes in fig. 5 is the elaborate gold work on

the Chancellor's robe which makes it more noticeable than the others. A senior officer interviewed at Rose University was aware that academic attire worn by university officials could denote the institutional rank and status of the wearer. They went on to explain differences between schemes of dress worn by senior officials at Rose University and those at another university where they had worked:

...well it [academic dress worn by university officials] changes depending on your seniority, which it doesn't here. At my previous university Pro Vice Chancellor level wore green with gold braiding, the registrar and deputy registrar would be in green too. The Vice Chancellor would be red, same as here and the colour is almost the same as here. The Deputy Vice Chancellor was new and they chose red for that one as well, so it's almost identical red to the one here. It was very interesting that all the ones here are all red. Whereas at my previous university the Pro-Chancellor who had the same role as Chair of Council would be green because it's a governance role, whereas the Chancellor would be the same red as the Vice-Chancellor so there's a very interesting difference there between managerial governance roles and those senior executive roles, very interesting.

Senior Officer 3, Rose University, 19 June 2014

This suggests that academic attire worn by senior officials at degree ceremonies does reflect and enact institutional authority and hierarchy but may do so differently at different institutions. This was noticeable at degree ceremonies attended by Rose University senior officials at their partner institutions.

### 5.3.3. How Institutional Growth is reflected through Academical Dress Worn by Senior Officers

Reviewing the order of procession in the first fifty years of degree ceremony programme guides at Rose University highlighted how the number of senior officers had increased as the university grew. Consequently, new academic attire had been commissioned and the old recycled. Table 7 lists ceremonial and senior officers in order of procession at Rose University in 1965, and those present and available for ceremonies in 2014.

1965	2014
The Marshal of Ceremonies	The Marshals (2)
Academics and University Staff	Academics & University Staff
The Principals	Master of Ceremonies
Public Orator	Presenters
University Secretary	Public Orator
The Pro-Vice Chancellor	University Secretary
The Vice-Chancellor	Chief Administration Officer
The Deputy Pro-Chancellor	Chief Financial Officer
The Pro-Chancellor	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education)
The Mace Bearer	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research)
The Chancellor	Pro-Vice Chancellor (International)
The Halberdiers	The Deputy Vice Chancellor
	The Vice-Chancellor
	The Deputy Pro-Chancellor
	The Pro-Chancellor
	The Mace Bearer
	The Chancellor
	The Halberdiers

Table 7: Growth in the Number and Type of Ceremonial and Senior Officers at Rose University between 1965 and 2014

This expansion was noted by a senior officer of the university:

what I've noticed here which is different to other degree ceremonies is there is a proliferation of university robes, so all of the front row are wearing them, whereas actually in some places you would get the

Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, and that would be it  
there would be three people wearing it

Senior Officer 4, Rose University, 24.6.14

This suggests there are multiple interpretations of hierarchy being enacted at different institutions through academic dress worn by senior officers at degree ceremonies.

One of the interviewees at Rose was directly involved in commissioning new robes and explained the association between new roles in the university and new robes as follows:

...there are a couple of new roles in the University which I guess didn't exist before, but they're quite senior roles and so we've decided to create robes for them. I think reflecting changing university structures, in this case it's probably about the changing university management structures, many institutions are dominated by academics, and professional services if you like, and Rose like other universities may have these as well, we now have a Chief Financial Officer and a Chief Administrative Officer who really sit up there at the top table, its right that they should be represented as a very senior ...at the ceremony so they have a robe which represents that.

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13

The commissioning of new robes to accommodate increases in the number of senior officers at Rose reflects the university's growth and structural change at a senior level. It also reflects the importance being given at Rose to new non-traditional roles with titles more commonly associated with large business organisations. Consequently, one might argue this contributes to discourse about the corporatisation of higher education, particularly how it is enacted.

During this study, four senior officers at Rose University shared the task of Presiding Officer at ceremonies held in the UK and overseas: the Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor. One of these senior officers summed up how their role had also grown and changed over the years:

...the jobs of the people presiding have changed as well, in the centre there's still the Vice Chancellor but if you think about what the size of the organisation is, not only the size of the ceremonies, but the amount of bureaucracy you're responsible for etc. it's just you know that the whole thing is changing.

Senior Officer 3, Rose University, 19.6.14

#### 5.3.4. Academical Dress in relation to Collaborative Institutional Partnerships

Amongst the types of growth occurring at the time of this study were different sorts of overseas collaborative institutional partnerships. Previous contemporary studies about degree ceremonies have neglected the impact these arrangements might have on degree ceremonies. What follows is an account based on data collected at Rose University about how academical dress was introduced to Lotus Institute in India, one of Rose University's collaborative institutional partners.

#### 5.3.5. Introducing Academical Dress in the context of a Franchise Partnership in India

Rose University was responsible for establishing and co-ordinating degree ceremonies in India as part of its franchise relationship with Lotus Institute. Evidence in this study recalls how the introduction of academical dress occurred in the run up to the first degree ceremony in 2010:

...so when we started talking about arranging robes for the graduating students, they [academic staff at Lotus] started saying ‘well what robes will we wear?’ ‘We need to have robes that represent us on the platform.’

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13.

This indicates that academic staff at Lotus Institute also wanted to be able to wear academical dress to degree ceremonies, and how they considered it important to be able to reflect their academic identity through wearing it.

Providing academical attire proved problematic initially for organisers at Rose University because at the time there were no established robemakers present in the vicinity. There were a number of reasons why established robemakers had not entered the market in India at this time:

...they have a different model there [Lotus, India] in that the students buy their robes when they graduate and I think this reflects obviously the different market because the sort of prices that Rose University robemakers [established robemakers] would be charging even to ship the robes out to India and to do it at a lower cost base, were still £20 - £25 UK money which is too much... for that money in India you would expect to take it away with you, so they've sourced a local supplier and they've now got a very good interpretation of the Rose gown in a good quality material and the hoods are pretty well made actually and are passable as a Rose hood so that worked very well.

Organiser, Rose University, 8.3.14

Growth in higher education achieved through different types of collaborative institutional partnerships, such as the franchise arrangement between Lotus Institute and Rose University, thus have the potential to create challenges for both the

organisers and the established robemakers in the UK. Different local practices and expectations about the affordability of academical dress make it difficult for an established robemaker in the UK to enter this market. This left Rose University in the position of having to source academical dress locally, which proved more problematic than anticipated. A senior official from Rose University described the attire worn to the first ceremony in India in 2010 as follows:

They looked like bin liners with a zip on as far as I could see and they were told this isn't good enough. They've got to have equal quality gowns and anyway the following year they did.

Senior Officer 6, Rose University, 3.6.14.

What is most interesting about this comment is how the quality of academical dress at Lotus was compared to that worn at Rose University, and how Rose University wanted parity of dress between institutions. This example also illuminated how relations of power were enacted between the two institutions. Implicit is the suggestion that the quality of academic attire needed to resemble the quality of attire worn at the more established institution conferring degrees. One of the organisers at Rose University elaborated:

I think we feel strongly that this is a Rose University experience, they've got a Rose degree, and ...I suppose two things, to us in the UK those robes seemed quite cheap they didn't seem to carry the sense of formality or the sense of occasion that the Rose or any UK graduation robe carry really, and I think we felt that as they were graduating from Rose with a Rose degree albeit from another country they should have robes that are similar, if not identical to a Rose robe and hood.

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13

The way quality and formality were constructed in relation to academical dress by the organiser was noticeably different to how it was constructed in India. The robes made and worn to the first ceremony were a visible reflection and enactment of these different interpretations and highlighted the culturally situated nature of academical dress.

There were other features of academic dress where different constructions of meaning had more profound consequences for the Rose University organisers:

Similarly we felt quite strongly about the hood, that the hood should closely match... we were very disappointed....so the first year our partner outsourced it locally, a decision was made there quite late on I think to revert to a standard Indian style, and on one level that was liveable with but what was very difficult for all of us was that they made one of the hoods in a different colour, and from a professional point of view I was extremely disappointed with that decision because it suggested we hadn't had the quality control to say 'no' that's wrong, we need to change it.

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13.

In the UK the colour and shape of a hood relate to the type of degree being awarded and the institution awarding it. Therefore based on this general system, changing the colour and shape of a hood potentially changes the award and institution awarding it. Hence the discomfort expressed by the organiser at Rose University. However, those with little or no previous knowledge about academic dress may be less informed about established protocols and categorisations, and overseas partners may have a different cultural view about such matters and how they are applied. The nature of the franchise relationship according to this respondent does not only relate to establishing some control over the quality of academic work but also to academical dress.

However, this was not the same at another of Rose University's collaborative partner institutions, Hibiscus University in Malaysia. Here students and staff had access to Ede and Ravenscroft, an established robemaker in country. Being able to outsource this aspect of degree ceremonies to an established robemaker made life easier for Rose and Hibiscus since it resulted in repetitive and consistent provision of an agreed scheme of replicable academical dress to a standard that satisfied both partners. Consequently, the data demonstrates that having accessible established robemakers makes it easier when establishing new degree ceremonies overseas in the context of collaborative partnership arrangements. The absence of an established robemaker in India created more work for organisers but also opened up a new market opportunity for local tailors. It further highlighted the way perceptions of quality and consistency were culturally situated and that the institution with authority to confer degrees in this partnership led on these points of difference.

#### 5.3.6. Academical Dress worn by Senior Officers in the Context of Dual Partnership Arrangements

The presiding officer representing Rose wore the most elaborate and distinctive robes where Rose University was the lead institution in conferring most degrees. At Hibiscus University, where dual partnership arrangements were in place, students received their degrees from both institutions. The presiding officers from both institutions in this case conferred degrees and wore gowns of a similar quality that stood out from the rest:

I think their colour is blue [Hibiscus] so in Malaysia it's a dual degree, so our Vice Chancellor and their Chancellor are on the platform, and so you have two very vivid and very warm ceremonial colours up there on the platform conveying the importance of this [degree ceremony], and particularly in that

context if our own officers weren't wearing those robes then it would suggest that Rose is a lesser partner or that the Rose side of the degree is less important and clearly it is a dual degree and they are equally important.

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13.

The parity, quality and standard of academic attire worn by presiding officers in this case was related to the type of institutional partnership and conferral responsibilities that were in place. Evidence presented in 5.3.2. suggests these links may be precarious and should be treated with a degree of caution. There was evidence to suggest that the highly embellished elaborate garments worn by Chancellors and senior officers drew attention and generated effects of hierarchy, status and authority through their materiality, and through the connections they made; however, would the same garments generate the same effects if they were worn for gardening? This sort of distinction lies at the heart of the work that actor-network theory does, which argues that actants only achieve the effects they do through their relations and interactions with others.

#### **5.4. Overview**

Guided by the framework of inquiry, the methodological approach generated insights into how ceremonial mace and academical dress, widely recognised but little known, were involved in the assemblage and perpetuation of degree ceremonies. Previous studies by Wilson (1952) and Magolda (2003) make no mention of ceremonial mace. Magolda (2003) does provide brief details about academical dress, it's potential to transmit relations of power, hierarchies and how it is critical to the performance of ceremonies, but not how these effects are achieved.

As higher education systems continue to grow at an exponential rate around the world, the analysis showed how ceremonial mace contributed to the extension and expansion of degree ceremonies in a variety of ways.

The ways mace were involved in the extension of degree ceremonies through Rose University's various collaborative institutional partnership arrangements indicated variance according to the type of relationship and location of the partner institution. Mace were carried in front of the presiding officer representing the institution that had authority to award degrees, although in a dual partnership overseas a mace was carried in front of the Chancellor of the local institution rather than the presiding officer from the UK.

Ceremonial mace assemble a network that visibly draws attention to higher education institutions that have authority to confer degrees and in so doing not only contribute to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies but also to the perpetuation of higher education's heritage, tradition and credentials to confer such awards.

The durability of these effects are related in part to the durability of materials used to make the mace, which plays a part in their capacity to generate stabilising effects over the *longue durée* (Sayes, 2014). However, the analysis showed that mace are not isolated entities but rely on other actants and conditions of growth to be designed, made, carried, transported, photographed, and maintained. Ceremonial mace also drew attention because they were different from more mundane everyday objects.

The analysis demonstrates that academical dress added to the occasion for many and had the capacity to generate different transformational effects. For example, academical dress was associated with a change in status and assisted ceremonial officers through crowded spaces. Another ceremonial officer reported that wearing academical attire drew attention to them in a way that wearing normal attire did not.

Transformational effects have been related to a change in status consistent with rites of passage described by Van Gennep (1960). The various reports suggest that academical dress has the capacity to enact multiple transformations in different ways such that its effects are more heterogeneous than one might expect.

Academical dress worn by senior officers at ceremonies in this study assembled various hierarchies depending on the institution and collaborative institutional partnership arrangement. At Rose University the hierarchy was distinguishable by the gold and silver facings on similar coloured robes. Different schemes were described for different institutions meaning that robes worn by senior officers were not consistent or reliable indicators of institutional status or role. However, in this study they did embody different institutional emphasis in organisational structure and strategic imperatives.

Academical robes worn by university Chancellors in this study were more consistent and reliable in comparison; there appeared to be convergence in the style, design and elaborate embellishments of these garments. Only those institutions with authority to award degrees had such elaborate robes or indeed a Chancellor to wear them.

Accordingly, these robes were particularly associated with institutional authority.

The analysis of academical dress in different conditions of growth illuminated the role that established robemakers play in stabilising degree ceremonies. This was most apparent when Rose University organisers were tasked with establishing new degree ceremonies in collaboration with a franchise partner in India in the absence of an established robemaker based in the country. Market conditions in India were not conducive for established robemakers in the UK. Costs associated with shipping and hiring their attire at the time of this study would be exorbitant by local standards in India, where students would expect to own the robes and take them home for the same

fees. The attire thus had to be made locally resulting in a new market for robe-making in the area surrounding the Lotus Institute in India. However, the garments initially produced revealed the culturally situated nature of academic attire, particularly in relation to how 'quality' was constructed. This related not only to the materials used but also to the design of garments and colour of hoods. The discrepancies that emerged illuminated how knowledge and use of academic attire was limited in the absence of established robemakers, particularly overseas. It also demonstrated the way the heritage and many traditions associated with academical dress have developed incrementally over centuries in the West.

As more higher education institutions open their doors around the world, there is the potential for schemes of dress to emerge that may confuse existing schemes that have been used in the UK and USA for many years. This growth also raises the issue of how many variations or schemes of dress are possible within current designs in use. Having established robemakers at degree ceremonies appeared to minimise the potential for replication and confusion.

In summary, the repetitive and consistent inclusion of ceremonial mace and academical dress worn by Chancellors in the ceremonies in this study contributed to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies and transmitting effects of authority. The way this was achieved varied according to different conditions of growth. Academical dress worn by other senior officers appeared to be more fluid and adaptable than ceremonial mace. However, most striking was that both actants were not isolated entities but relied on their affiliations, and interactions with other actants to produce their effects; a principle feature of actor-network theory that informs the framework of inquiry used in this study (Latour, 2005).

These actants and their associations did not miraculously appear *in situ*; rather they were prepared and transported to degree ceremonies, placed and ordered in particular ways, and maintained in order to be able to achieve the effects. The details regarding how this occurred is presented in Chapter Six.

## **Chapter 6      Preparation and Maintenance Work**

Preparation and maintenance work in the run up to degree ceremonies has been cursorily examined in previous studies about degree ceremonies (Wilson, 1952, Magolda, 2003). Magolda (2003) has perhaps paid most attention to how venues, staging and physical layout have the capacity to generate effects of power, hierarchy, and institutional values. Missing from this account though are detailed explanations or descriptions about how these effects are assembled and generated, and whether the same effects are achieved at different institutions outside the USA in similar or alternative conditions of growth. Through preparation and maintenance work it is possible to see how particular effects such as these are assembled and maintained (Denis and Pontille, 2010). The analysis presented here addresses this gap in the literature; the aim is to draw attention to the extensive preparation and maintenance work that takes place before degree ceremonies, and examine how it contributes to the perpetuation of them. This chapter focuses on what is largely hidden from view whilst Chapter Seven focuses on the visible, public performance of degree ceremonies.

Drawing on work by Denis and Pontille (2010, 2011, 2013), specific attention is paid to how material ordering and placement work before degree ceremonies generates stabilisation and order effects often associated with ritual (Moore and Myerhoff, 1977). Attention is also given to what threatens to disrupt this work, and how maintenance work can illustrate what is at stake when disruptions do occur (Denis and Pontille, 2011, 2013). The material vulnerability and fragility of degree ceremonies, somewhat overlooked in previous studies, is given attention here and in Chapter Seven.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that actants alone do not generate degree ceremonies; rather a great deal of preparation and maintenance work is required to assemble them in particular ways so they can achieve the effects they do. The emphasis is on Rose University where most access was gained.

The analysis highlights the relation between the preparation and maintenance work and different types of growth as well as marketing activity.

### **6.1. Maintenance of Venues**

How degree ceremonies were prepared and maintained was influenced in part by the venues where they were held, and how much control institutions had over them. Rose University and Hibiscus University had most control over venues used for ceremonies. The remaining four institutions hired venues and consequently had less influence over how they were prepared and maintained.

In 2013, Hargreaves College degree ceremonies were held in what was described as a ‘tired looking’ venue by one of the organisers from the College (see fig. 6 below). The original plasterwork at this venue had been restored in 1994 but observation notes taken at the time of this study described the venue as follows:

The auditorium is a faded playhouse, the pink and white paint is flaking away when you look closely but the large art deco lights hanging from the ceiling are impressive. I have been told by many it is a ‘tired space’.

Observation Notes: Hargreaves College Degree Ceremonies, 24.10.13



Fig. 6: The Flaking Paintwork at the Venue used by Hargreaves College of Higher Education, 24.10.13.

A similar situation was related by a senior member of staff at Rock College. The venue used for their ceremonies had been similarly ‘tired looking’ and the College had contemplated moving venues. However, a visit by H.M. Queen in 2009 to attend a Royal Variety Performance precipitated a renovation programme which resulted in the College continuing to use the venue for its ceremonies. Hence repair and maintenance of a venue contributed to the perpetuation of Rock Ceremonies in the same venue. The venue described in Magolda’s study also underwent ‘a temporary facelift to spruce it up’ (Magolda, 2003, p.788).

Venues that are considered to be ‘tired looking’ or in need of a facelift do not therefore appear to make desired connections or generate the sort of effects wanted by institutions. In this way, the venue’s condition reflected on how an institution wished to project its degree ceremonies and, in turn, an institution’s control over a venue influenced their role in its maintenance.

## **6.2. Use of Venues in relation to Different Conditions of Growth**

The analysis presented three distinct examples which illustrated how different conditions of growth were related to the venues used for degree ceremonies.

### **6.2.1. Managing Degree Ceremonies across Multiple Venues**

Colossus University accommodated more students at their ceremonies than any of the other institutions in the sample. In Magolda's study (2003), large numbers of students were accommodated by hosting ceremonies in a sports arena. In contrast, Colossus University hired multiple venues around the UK to hold their ceremonies and students could choose where they attended based on geographical location. The organiser described them as follows:

They're all very different. You see venues like the London Barbican is a superb concert hall. Ely Cathedral is very dramatic. They are all very different, but you know they all work in their own way. Some are older than others. Some could probably do with changing. Some are, you know, some are fantastic. You know, all the time we're looking at does this still meet our needs? Do we need to be looking around for others?

Organiser, Colossus University, 24.9.13

This suggests again that the maintenance of hired venues is constantly under review and susceptible to change.

Practical difficulties associated with working across multiple venues had led organisers at Colossus University to outsource the staging of degree ceremonies to contracted robemakers. The robemakers transported robes and stage furniture to different venues around the country and acted as stage crew to set up and manage the robing and photography areas. Using the same company to repetitively carry out this

work meant there was a degree of consistency and stability at each event. It was important to the organiser at Colossus that students attending ceremonies at different venues had a consistent experience. They described how consistency was achieved as follows:

...we like the ceremony to have the same wording, we have a form of words which we use throughout the ceremony which is basically a script of what happens, what everybody says so the words are identical, we just plug in different names.....it's the same academic dress for the senior officers, it's the same academic dress for the students, but obviously the processing staff wear their own academic dress, but we want to make sure the ceremony itself is consistent. So the local organisers on the ground sort out the catering, sort out the musicians, things like that but we have a standard programme. We have half an hour for a processional piece and a recessional piece, but there's regional variations so we do give them a bit of leeway, but not too much, we want the ceremony form itself to be absolutely standard. So what we want is for all graduates to get the same consistency and experience. I mean for instance we've got pipers in Scotland and then we sing the national anthem in Wales, little things like that, but overall it's standardised.

Organiser, Colossus University, 24.9.13.

Perpetuating Colossus degree ceremonies in a consistent manner was achieved across different venues in different places by repetitively producing:

- a ceremonial script which could be adapted to local needs
- a procession and recession
- prescribed academic attire for staff and students

- the same ceremonial furniture (including mace and macebearer)
- staging, robing and photography assembled by established robemakers

It was the repetitive inclusion of these features that contributed to the order and stability of Colossus degree ceremonies across different sites. There were opportunities for local adaptations regarding features such as music and catering but these were kept to a minimum. Implicit throughout were relations of power and authority in the prescription and allocation of preparation and maintenance work.

Evidence suggests, however, that things did not always go to plan. On one occasion a blue carpet for the stage did not arrive, and a substitute had to be hurriedly sourced locally; on another occasion, keys to room where the mace was being held were lost and a ceremony had to take place without it. These incidents illuminate the fragility and vulnerability of degree ceremonies to such breakdowns, discussed further in Chapter Seven, but also how ceremonies still ran without objects such as the mace.

### 6.2.2. Managing Fluctuations in Growth at Rose University

Fluctuations in the number of students graduating at Rose University ceremonies over the years as a result of different periods of growth described earlier in Chapter Four were evident in the analysis related to the use of the venue at Rose University. The spatial constraints of the Great Hall used on campus for degree ceremonies were mentioned by the organiser and the previous organiser. These constraints had presented challenges for Rose organisers when the university used to host degree ceremonies for colleges in the area. As the colleges grew so did the number of graduating students, and in turn, the number of degree ceremonies held at Rose. This resulted in a former senior officer at Rose University discussing the possibility of

hiring a local stadium as a way of accommodating huge numbers of graduating students:

...he [former senior officer at Rose University] said to [member of ceremonies team] shouldn't we take a stadium and get four stages set up and we can get four officers presiding and have one big occasion, do it in one day and have four platforms going at the same time all at once.

Organiser 3, Rose University, 15.4.14.

The idea of finding an alternative venue to accommodate increasing numbers was discussed but then dropped when two of the local colleges in question converted to university status and established their own degree ceremonies elsewhere. However, the idea of using a sports arena resonates with the ceremony described by Magolda (2003) where a basketball arena was used to accommodate large scale commencement ceremonies held in the USA. Respondents in Magolda's study suggested the arena was less than ideal, and that participants were powerfully influenced by the sporting context and rally like atmosphere generated by the arena. After reviewing previous studies in Chapter Three the overall conclusion drawn was that bigger is not always better. The challenge for Rose University dissipated when two of the colleges achieved university status and moved ceremonies to their own venues. Although as student enrolments continue to increase at Rose the challenge of how to accommodate increasing numbers of students at degree ceremonies has not gone away but merely been postponed to a later date.

Rose University has grown internationally as well as in the UK. Through a dual partnership with Hibiscus University in Malaysia, and a franchise partnership with Lotus Institute in India, senior officers attended ceremonies at both overseas institutions to confer Rose degrees.

As discussed in the previous chapter, senior officers and organisers at Rose University were concerned about achieving a similar level of consistency for their students at overseas venues.

### 6.2.3. Establishing new Ceremonies Overseas

The organiser at Rose University described some of the challenges associated with working at new venues overseas:

It's [degree ceremonies] held in a Hotel in New Delhi, it's a very nice hotel ... it was problematic last year because they put bookings in too close together and it wasn't ready for the ceremony but as a result of that The Lotus Group had done quite a lot of work with the hotel in advance to say 'it's got to be right or we're going to be very unhappy' so we're sort of looking at that venue becoming our graduation venue really and that will make things much clearer.

Organiser, Rose University, 8.3.14.

Working with a new venue in India that had no previous experience of staging degree ceremonies created a number of challenges initially for Rose University. In the context of this overseas franchise relationship, it seems that Rose University as the institution awarding degrees had influence over the choice of venue, and how ceremonies were assembled and branded.

A senior officer at Rose University discussed how the type of venue chosen in India related to the 'brand' and prestige that Rose University wanted to convey, and which they said students would expect, although the term 'brand' was not one customarily used:

...we don't necessarily talk about it [brand] that way here but I think it is certainly heavily implicit.

Senior Officer 5, Rose University, 17.7.14

In this instance, the term 'branding' was not used overtly which may relate to sensitivities university faculty might have with the term (MacDonald, 2013). Yet in this instance the choice of hotel for ceremonies in India was geared to the student market there and developing an institutional image that promoted the status and prestige of the institution in a way that students in India might want to connect with (MacDonald, 2013). This serves to reinforce a point made earlier in Chapter Three that universities have multiple images in relation to multiple stakeholders which are not always congruent (Ibid). However I would go further and suggest that degree ceremonies also reflect and enact a brand associated with the heritage, traditions and credentials of higher education with the capacity to connect multiple stakeholder groups through widespread inclusion of the seven features of degree ceremonies mentioned earlier in Chapter Two that have endured over centuries.

### **6.3. Perpetuating Preparation and Maintenance Practices Overseas**

At the time of this study, degree ceremonies held at Rose University's dual partner institution in Malaysia were well established, and had the benefit of having an experienced roblemaker in country. In contrast, Rose University was still in the throes of stabilising degree ceremonies with their new franchise partner in India and this created opportunities to capture interview data from senior officers and organisers to provide a rare insight into how they went about assembling new ceremonies:

When we were faced with a blank sheet of paper three and a half years ago which said we now need to organise a graduation ceremony in India -

obviously my starting point was the Rose ceremony. How do we do it at Rose, but I also started to think yes but if I was starting again with a blank sheet of paper - is that how I would do it? And actually I made some changes on that basis. So one of the things is that in India we present the students by their programme of study and not just by their type of award so that puts us more in line with what other universities do, and I think in terms of the student experience of graduation it probably makes more sense...and actually we had to do quite a lot of work on the ceremonies database to enable us to run the ceremonies in India in terms of accessing the data and then using it. As part of that development work I built in the capability to organise the students in the ceremony in a different way because before we could only organise it by type of award or faculty or college whereas now we can organise it any way we like really - so we can organise it by programme of study, or by type of award, or by college, or institution.

Organiser, Rose University, 8.3.14

Establishing new degree ceremonies overseas provided Rose organisers with an opportunity to make some changes. Presenting students differently in India resulted in the Rose University database being adapted, making it more flexible and able to accommodate variations in how students are presented at different institutions in the context of different conditions of growth.

Further changes and adaptations were made, which included adapting the ceremonial script:

the ceremony script that we use in India is very different because when I came to it I realised that nobody with a role in the India ceremony will actually know what to do except our Chancellor or Vice Chancellor, so it's quite a

different document and I think it's probably more accessible and I was going to bring a copy on Monday to ask what do you think if we adapted and used something like this instead of the one we're currently using?

Organiser, Rose University, 8.3.14

The changes made to the ceremony script for India were presentational rather than procedural, making the document more accessible than the script that had been used at Rose for many years. Improving the accessibility of this document made it easier for new preparation and maintenance workers with no experience of degree ceremonies to understand the procedural order of the ceremonies. The new layout for the ceremonial script was adopted later at ceremonies held on Rose's campus after controversy caused by the introduction of particular changes, and this is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

One further change was introduced when ceremonies were being established in India. This included a local innovation:

...the other thing that's been interesting as well are the adaptations we made to the ceremony overall so for example introducing an Indian invocation of knowledge, a traditional poem used at ceremonies set to music, so you can either speak the words over the music, but it's always the same music or you can actually sing it, so that was one of the adaptations we made to the ceremony in India

Organiser, Rose University, 8.3.14

Just as Colossus University allowed for local adaptations to be incorporated across multiple sites (see 6.2.1.), the ceremonies Rose established in India resulted in similar innovations. The analysis demonstrates a pattern emerging regarding how higher

education institutions providing degree ceremonies for students across multiple sites seek to stabilise and generate a consistent institutional image whilst still allowing for local adaptation and innovation.

### 6.3.1. Culturally Situated Nature of Preparation and Maintenance Work

This section focuses on preparation processes and maintenance work that went on behind the scenes in relation to early ceremonies organised by Rose University through their franchise partnership in India. The analysis demonstrates how the absence of established robemakers in the country impacted on this work.

One example related to the wearing of academic hoods to ceremonies at Lotus Institute in India:

I said to one of the members of [Lotus] staff – your hoods are all wrong, you can't go on like that and they were suddenly like, 'well how should they be?' – so I pinned one of them and I said I haven't got time to do you all so I'm going to do one and you just need to sort yourselves out and they did – every single one of them changed their hoods so it was really important to them that their hoods were on correctly, but what really struck me was that they were supposed to be helping us do the student robes but actually they all decided collectively it was much more important that as faculty their robes were correct before they bothered about the students hoods.

Organiser, Rose University, 8.3.14

Until the Rose organiser pointed out that hoods were positioned 'incorrectly' the Lotus staff were unaware that anything was amiss, thereby highlighting that knowledge and practices associated with wearing academic hoods are culturally situated and learnt. However, it appeared to be important for staff at Lotus Institute to

have their hoods pinned ‘correctly’ in front of students, and their supporters. They were happy to follow the lead of their more established institutional partner. This example demonstrated how knowledge and practices associated with the customary wear of academical dress in the West were shared transculturally.

Relations of power were also evident in the observation that while Lotus staff had a choice about whether to change their hoods around, Lotus students did not:

We were up to the wire because no one had any experience of how to correctly put a hood on and they were all walking around with their hoods upside down and the wrong way round and it looked terrible. They were perfectly pinned but wrong so we just did a complete sweep of the students and just turned as many round as possible so they looked correct ready for going up on stage so I was really pleased with that.

Organiser, Rose University, 8.3.14.

These two examples at Lotus Institute ceremonies highlight how material ordering and maintenance work were culturally situated, although how order was achieved in each case was different. Lotus staff were given more discretion to change their hoods than students. The overall aim of the organiser from Rose University was to reflect and enact consistency between ceremonies held at Rose University in the UK with those held at Lotus Institute in India.

It would be easy to assume this was an example of western cultural values being exerted over another institution in a different part of the world, but the evidence collected in this study mentioned above and earlier in Chapter Five suggests that these interactions were influenced by the type of relationship that existed between institutions involved in ceremonies. For example, Rose University did not have the

same influence over ceremonies held at Hibiscus University in Malaysia as they did at Lotus Institute in India. Evidence does indicate though that there are still power relations being enacted over who is defining the standard and deferral to this. With limited access to local staff at the overseas sites it is difficult to tell if power relations between Rose staff and Lotus staff and students were ever overtly or implicitly challenged. Neither is it possible to describe the unevenness of power relations between these parties including those between Lotus staff and students. What the evidence does point to though is the order of priorities for Rose staff which seemed to point to students experiences as being key.

The evidence in this sample also points to overseas institutions wanting to have degree ceremonies of a similar standard to those enacted in more established institutions in Europe and the USA and that, like institutions in the UK and USA, they find ways to reflect and enact their local identity and cultures through degree ceremonies.

#### **6.4. Placing and Ordering Actants**

Once the choice of venue had been resolved, a great deal of work went into assembling and supporting a degree ceremony. Latour and Hermant (1998) drew attention to work that often goes on behind the scenes, arguing it is instrumental in making and shaping social settings to different effects, in different spaces and places. This was particularly noticeable at Rose University where I had most access to preparation and maintenance work in the run-up to ceremonies. Latour and Hermant (1998) do not focus particularly on the processes and workers involved in preparation work; this aspect is addressed though by Denis and Pontille (2010, 2011) and their work informs what follows in this chapter.

At Rose University, support staff had to check and verify that students had satisfactorily completed their courses and paid any outstanding debts to the university before Senate could approve a list of graduands giving them permission to graduate at the next appropriate ceremony or in absentia. In the immediate run up to ceremonies there were porters, catering staff, academic staff, university officials, cleaners, IT technicians, estate and facilities staff, registry staff, college staff and departmental staff involved in some way with the preparation of the ceremonies. The organiser and the ceremonies team were responsible for liaising with the students throughout and assembling and briefing different groups of people. Many of the people involved were responsible for preparing the venue and the placement of material objects and artefacts involved. The next section describes a detailed example of how this was achieved in relation to seating arrangements at Rose University, a feature cursorily examined in Magolda (2003).

#### 6.4.1. Seating Arrangements at Rose University

Preparation, placement and ordering processes were observed in the days running up to ceremonies at Rose University. Each year, usually two weeks before the summer undergraduate ceremonies, Porters cleared the Hall of all the furniture and then the cleaners spent one to two days buffing the floors. The Porters then returned to build the stage and start laying out chairs which took a further two to three days. The way that the chairs were laid out began to set the scene for the ceremonies and illustrated how order was slowly established (see figs. 7, 8 and 9 below).



Fig. 7: Bringing out the Chairs in the Hall at Rose University, July 2014

Once the chairs had been laid out in rows facing the stage, long metal poles were used to secure them in place. This kept the chairs fixed in straight lines throughout the ceremonies which generated the effect of neatness and order in the seating areas.

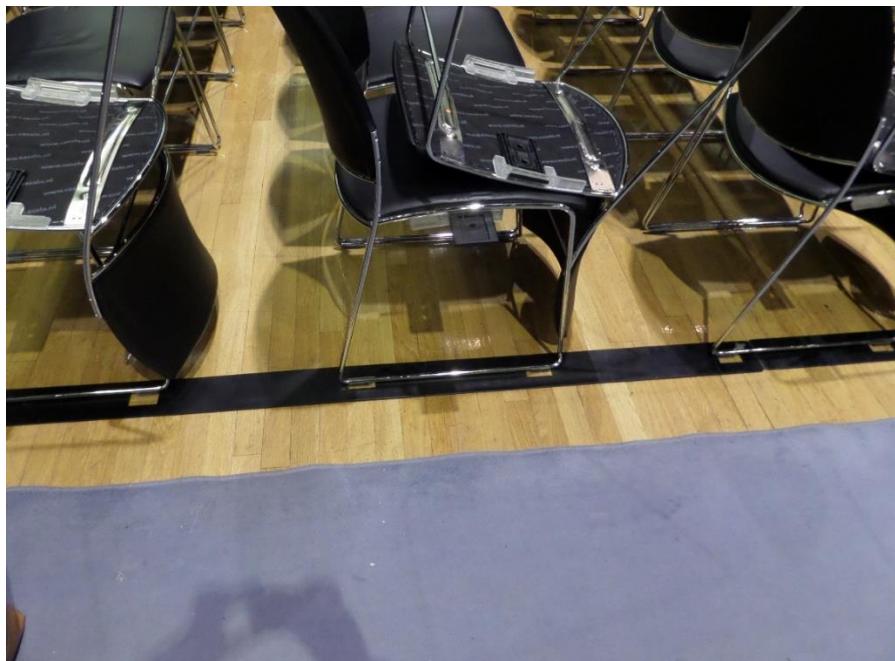


Fig. 8: Laying Out and Securing Chairs in Straight Lines, the Hall, Rose University, July 2014

A vague hierarchical assemblage began to show itself as rows of chairs situated on stage faced rows of chairs situated at a lower level in the main body of the Hall.

However, once the Chancellor's Chair was put in place a hierarchical assemblage

could be more clearly discerned. This was because the Chancellor's Chair was different and larger than the other chairs and was positioned centre stage on the front row slightly forward from all the other chairs on stage.



Fig. 9: Chairs in Position and Chancellor's Chair Centre Stage, The Hall, Rose University, July 2014.

The Chancellor's chair had the best view of the hall and could be seen by all the seats facing the stage. It was a solid wooden chair with a blue leather seat and a high back and appeared 'throne like'. Unlike the other chairs in the room, the Chancellor's chair bore the coat of arms of the university. The remaining chairs bore the 'swoosh' logo used by the university since 1989. The 'swoosh' logo was replaced in 2014 with a shield bearing the university's coat of arms drawn from the university's full heraldic design. The chairs had not been changed so they no longer matched the university's logo design.

What is interesting in how the seating was prepared and positioned in this case was how the authority, power, and external image of the university was assembled in an unobtrusive manner. The act of preparing the Hall for ceremonies was a regular, repetitive task for the Porters who were often required to assemble the Hall into different configurations for different events. Based on conversations with the Porters it seemed that at the forefront of their minds was the job at hand; the repetition and routine of laying out chairs was not an overt deliberate act of positioning chairs according to the authority or status of the person sitting in them. Instead the chairs were laid out in the same pattern that they had always been, until someone in authority said different, a mistake was made or something out of the ordinary happened to disrupt events. This repetition was perpetuated and generated a sense of continuity and consistency. The chairs themselves were important in terms of creating a sense of continuity, order, precision and uniformity in the Hall. Each chair was the same colour and design with the University's old swoosh logo on the back. The fact that the Chancellor's Chair was significantly different and positioned centre stage raised the expectation that whoever sat in it was going to be different in some way. When the Chancellor sat in it wearing the most elaborate gown in the room, this 'layering' of difference and significance was intensified.

In this way, the assemblage of hierarchy was not overt but enacted by the material objects, and the preparation and maintenance routines used to assemble the Hall. The resulting effect of order and stabilisation generated by the layout of seating in the Hall at Rose University was only achieved because the Porters knew which chairs to use, how to lay them out, and because the chairs themselves also suited the purpose for which they were being used. Therefore, the aim for the Porters was to stabilise the chairs in the physical environment. This reinforces a point made by Denis and

Pontille (2010) that in carrying out such operations workers do not pay attention to the discursive content of the object but rather to its alignment and stability in the physical environment.

This example illuminated how the chairs in the Hall were translated in ways that created a sense of order, neatness and hierarchy. However, as Law suggests, ‘disorder, or other orders, are only precariously kept at bay’ (Law, 2009, p.145). The precariousness of these translations was highlighted at Rose University in December 2015.

#### 6.4.2. The Precarious Nature of Preparation and Maintenance Work

During the weekend of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 Storm Desmond brought torrential rainfall to the North West of England which resulted in a local river breaking its banks and flooding the city and surrounding region where Rose University was located. Power was lost to over 55,000 homes in the area including the university campus south of the city. The postgraduate degree ceremonies were planned for the following Wednesday.

With no power on campus, students were told that the term would end a week earlier than planned and that they should arrange to leave and head home early. Staff were instructed not to return to the university until the situation had been rectified.

Remaining students were moved to two Halls on campus which were transformed into emergency accommodation while students made arrangements to leave. Large emergency generators were brought in to power the Halls (see fig. 10). One of the Halls was the main venue for degree ceremonies and the other was traditionally used by robemakers and photography during ceremonies. Postgraduate ceremonies were due to take place two days later on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015.



Fig. 10: Generator Providing Back-up Power to the Hall at Rose University, 9.12.15.

Porters and cleaners typically had between one and two weeks to prepare the Hall but on this occasion they had two days. Observation notes on the morning of the post-graduate ceremonies records:

They [The Hall Porters] said that people had put in a lot of extra hours to get it pulled together. I told them it looked great and they said “well not if you look closely – one of the rows of chairs has a big bend in it”.

Observation notes; Outside the Hall, Rose University, 9.40am.

Apart from a row of chairs with a bend in it and two velvet cushions missing from the Chancellor’s Chair the Hall looked the same as usual on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015. This was because those involved in preparing the Hall were not doing it for the first time. Preparation processes were speeded up by having a core group of actors with previous experience of repetitively assembling and ordering the same material actants in the same venue. Therefore, preparation processes and workers were involved in perpetuating ceremonies in a consistent manner under pressure. A point that was made by one of the organisers at Rose University:

...you've probably seen yourself there's a lot of continuity in terms of personnel, systems and processes and there's a lot of attachment to the way that things have always been done...so clearly there are benefits and disadvantages to that and I think in the context of a large-scale event like a graduation ceremony that has a certain amount of tradition and a lot of different facets to it, clearly you can only benefit by having people who know how their bit of that works... I think blips would then appear over time when key personnel changed and actually that's always been an opportunity to step back and say 'ok now we really need to look at how it works and do we want to change it or do we manage it differently?'

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13.

The organiser at Rose highlighted the importance of having experienced maintenance workers to generate continuity and consistency and how incremental changes to degree ceremonies at Rose University were regularly considered when personnel changed.

Repetitive preparation work carried out to place, order and secure seating in the Hall at Rose University generated stabilising effects and a sense of order. At the same time, the disruption in December 2015 demonstrated the precarious nature of this work and the fragility of ceremonies.

The example of how seating was placed and ordered at Rose resonated with the materiality of placement processes described by Denis and Pontille (2010). However, the placing and ordering people in a physical environment in this study proved to be a slightly more challenging affair than suggested by their work.

### 6.4.3. Lining-up the Front Row in Processional Order at Rose University

The consistent, formal, ordered procession of staff one saw entering a degree ceremony at Rose University belied the often chaotic and disruptive preparation and maintenance work that went into achieving it behind the scenes.

Assembling the academic procession happened in two stages. First, academics and members of staff were lined up by the Chief Marshal and Assistant Marshal, then led out into a waiting area next door, whilst those destined to be seated on the front row were lined up by the Master of Ceremonies.

The macebearer and halberdiers with their mace and weapons<sup>9</sup> to hand waited just outside the music room ready to join the rear of the procession (see fig. 11 below) while the front row was lined up inside (see fig.12 below).



Fig. 11: Macebearer and Halberdiers with Mace and Halberds, waiting to join the Senior Officers in Procession outside Academic Robing Room, Rose University, 10.12.14, 3.25pm

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<sup>9</sup> Halberdiers at Rose University carry what appear to be replicas of medieval weapons. Their origin, maker and reason for use at Rose University are currently unknown.

Magolda (2003) suggests that power relationships and hierarchies can be evident in the physical layout of ceremony participants, and that this is particularly evident in relation to front row seats, although there is little explanation or description of how these effects are assembled. However, this element was examined at Rose University where, unlike lining up academics and staff in the first part of the procession, a hierarchy was established during the lining up of those due to be seated on the front row. This varied according to which university officials were attending. For example, the role of Presiding Officer would always be taken by the Chancellor if he was present; in his absence, the role would be taken by another officer. The lining up was done according to seniority in terms of the institutional hierarchy. This differed in December 2015 due to the disruption associated with Storm Desmond.



Fig. 12: Lining up staff to be seated on the front row at Rose University, 10.12.14, 3.33pm

The placement and ordering of the second stage of the procession was carefully choreographed to align with where and when those seated on the front row arrived on

stage. For example, the presiding officer was placed at the rear of the procession, which meant they ascended the stage after everyone else. The public orator and presenter were placed at the front, which meant they were seated close to lecterns they would be using at either end of the stage.

Once the front row was lined up in processional order, the Master of Ceremonies would lead them out of the robing room to join the rear of the academic procession waiting in the adjoining area next door.

The macebearer and halberdiers would insert themselves into the procession as it left the music room. The macebearer taking up position in front of the presiding officer and the halberdiers bringing up the rear. This placement and order at the rear of the procession brought actants associated with institutional authority closer together which resulted in a layering and intensification of the effect of authority, see fig.13 below.



Fig. 13: Presiding Officer Preceded by Mace and followed by Halberdiers and Halberds, Rose University, Waiting to enter the Hall, 10.12.14, 3.40pm

As mentioned earlier in Chapter Five, a review of the first fifty years of programme guides at Rose University highlighted how the position and placement of the mace, presiding officer and halberdiers in the academic procession at Rose University had not changed since the first degree ceremonies in 1965.

The programme guides at Rose University show there were fewer ceremonies in the 1960s, when details of the order of procession rarely changed and presiding officers were named. Since 1997 the procession has taken a less prominent role in programme guides. A brief paragraph now broadly describes the order of procession in place of a detailed list and in 2013 the ‘mace’ disappeared from the order of procession and was replaced with ‘macebearer’. The first of these two adaptations to the programme guides provides organisers and senior officers with more flexibility to accommodate last minute changes of staff taking part in processions. The second suggests a diminishment of the importance of the mace.

Once the academic procession and front row were lined up in the adjoining area, they would wait in processional order while the students finished taking their seats, before moving to the main entrance to the Hall where they would wait for the ceremony to begin.

## **6.5. Overview**

Previous studies have only provided cursory examinations of preparation and maintenance work and few details about how such work is involved in generating particular effects through degree ceremonies (Wilson, 1952, Magolda, 2003).

Informed by the framework of inquiry which includes work developed by Denis and Pontille (2010, 2011), this chapter took a much closer look at how preparation and maintenance work produced various effects, and what happened when this work was

disrupted. Throughout the analysis attention was paid to how preparation and maintenance work contributed to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies in different conditions of growth, and whether it was entangled with marketing activity.

Before focusing on the detailed preparation and maintenance work, it was evident that how much control higher education institutions had over venues where ceremonies took place influenced how much control they had over the repair and maintenance of them. This study suggests there was a relationship between how well maintained a venue was, and the impact this had on the image an institution wished to project through degree ceremonies.

The analysis demonstrated how Colossus University and Rose University sought to achieve a consistent ceremonial experience for participants across different venues. The conditions in each case varied according to the presence or absence of various actants, the degree of experience of preparation and maintenance workers, and different conditions of growth.

As a distance learning provider, Colossus University provided students with a choice of venues across different geographical locations in the UK. They outsourced the transportation of actants and staging to their established robemakers who also provided robes and photography to maintain some consistency. A ceremonial script ensured that ceremonial procedures and wording were consistent across different sites. Local adaptations were catered for provided they did not detract from the procedures and wording in the main script. Colossus ceremonies were thereby perpetuated through preparation and maintenance work in ways that rendered them both similar and different. The ongoing vulnerability of these arrangements was evident when, for example, carpets didn't arrive or mace were inadvertently locked in a room and unavailable for a ceremony.

Perpetuating degree ceremonies overseas in a consistent manner as part of a franchise partnership arrangement with an institution in India generated several challenges for Rose University. The most notable of these was the absence of established robemakers and experienced preparation and maintenance workers. In Chapter Five the absence of an established robemaker was found to impact on the materials, design and style of robes and colour of hoods produced for ceremonies in India. The analysis in this chapter found that the absence of established robemakers led to staff and students wearing their academic hoods in an inconsistent and disordered way. In each instance, knowledge and practices associated with academic dress were shown to be culturally situated, learnt, and transculturally shared and interpreted. The absence of experienced preparation and maintenance workers led to the Rose organiser adapting the layout of the Rose University ceremonial script to make it more accessible for support staff learning how to organize and run ceremonies in India. Like the script used by Colossus across different venues, the one used in India did not deviate from basic procedures and forms of words used at Rose University ceremonies but nevertheless allowed for local innovations and adaptations.

Establishing new ceremonies in India also led to changes being made to Rose University's database, developing its capacity and flexibility to cope with variations in ceremonies held at different institutions.

Both these examples showed how degree ceremonies were perpetuated across different sites through preparation and maintenance work in different conditions of growth.

Closer examination of preparation and maintenance processes was possible at Rose University where most access was achieved. One of the more noticeable effects was

how a sense of order was achieved through the placement and positioning of chairs in the venue at Rose.

The arrangement of chairs relied on the knowledge and experience of porters, who co-ordinated with cleaners, technicians, flower arrangers, seating plans and organisers to ensure the correct location and number of chairs were laid out. As such the chairs and the porters arranging them were not isolated entities but part of a complex network of actants that were co-ordinating and adapting their activities in relation to one another.

Placing the Chancellor's chair centre stage drew attention to this part of the stage before the ceremony started and generated an expectation that someone important was going to sit there. The repetitive re-enactment of this layout contributed to the perpetuation of ceremonies at Rose in a consistent fashion, and developed knowledge and experience of those regularly tasked to do it.

The fragility of such ordering devices was evident when Storm Desmond disrupted preparations at Rose University in December 2015. The network of actors involved in preparing the Hall had to adapt by working more quickly for longer hours over a much shorter period of time. They were able to do this because they were experienced. If a team with little or no previous experience were tasked to do the same it is unlikely the result would have been as favourable. This example highlighted both the vulnerability of preparation and maintenance work and the value of having experienced workers.

The framework of inquiry employed for this study drew out differences between the placement and ordering of material and social actants. The inanimate nature of chairs rendered them amenable to being placed and ordered but due to budgetary constraints and more pressing priorities they were not changed when the university logo changed at Rose in 2014 making the existing logo visible on the chairs obsolete. On the other

hand, more attention was given to ensuring those sat on the front row were in the correct hierarchical order for procession. The effect of a hierarchy referred to by Magolda (2003) was established when lining up the front row at Rose University.

Whether placing and ordering chairs or people, preparation and maintenance work relied on networks and interactions with socio-material actants.

In summary, repetitive perpetuation and maintenance work carried out by experienced workers contributed to and aided the perpetuation of ceremonies. In India, where repetitious practices and processes had not been embedded, and workers had little or no experience or knowledge about ceremonies, adaptations were made to existing actants. These adaptations served to accommodate local changes made to ceremonies, and facilitated easier access to ceremonial procedures for new preparation and maintenance workers. However, the absence of established robemakers in this example highlighted the way knowledge, experience, processes and practices associated with academical dress are culturally situated, transculturally shared, learnt and interpreted. It also drew attention to the stabilising effects that established robemakers have on ceremonies when they are present.

The way Rose University and Colossus University maintained a consistent experience for participants across ceremonies different sites was similar, but also allowed for local adaptation and innovation. These examples demonstrated how preparation and maintenance work was linked to the assemblage and perpetuation of university image and reputation (Nguyen and Le Blanc, 2001). Complex networks of social and material actants, associations, processes and practices were involved in this work. Establishing new ceremonies presented opportunities for organisers to review and adapt this work to accommodate different conditions.

The analysis of ceremonies across Rose University's collaborative institutional partners indicated that the type of relationship in place determined the influence an institution had over degree ceremonies and how they were perpetuated. Evidence in this study suggests that rather than establish a unique and different degree ceremony, the associate colleges and collaborative overseas partners emulated ceremonial procedures and features used at Rose University ceremonies which, in their turn, are modelled on features associated with the rich heritage, traditions and credentials of ceremonies held at ancient universities that have been perpetuated and developed for centuries in Europe.

The preparation and maintenance of social and material actants before ceremonies, described in Chapters Five and Six, is often hidden from view for the majority of those attending. Yet, as this Chapter shows, this work and the actants involved influence the performance of ceremonies and effects generated. One of the aims of the next chapter is to demonstrate that maintenance work is ongoing throughout the performance of ceremonies, although in this case the work is carried out discretely in a highly visible public setting.

## Chapter 7 The Performance of Degree Ceremonies

The framework of inquiry in this study, and the analysis so far, suggests that social *and* material actants are involved in generating meaning and effects through degree ceremonies. Previous work on the performance of ceremonies such as Magolda's (2003) moves material actants, and preparation and maintenance work into the background, withdrawing their agentic effects alluded to during the staging and layout of the ceremony.

This Chapter suggests that agentic effects of material actants and maintenance work is ongoing. It argues that performances of degree ceremonies are not perpetuated through social actors alone, but instead through complex socio-material relations, enacted in association with careful preparation and maintenance work (Denis and Pontille, 2010, 2011). The analysis shows how maintenance work is ongoing during the performance by illuminating what happens when things go wrong which, in turn, demonstrates the precarious nature of these events. There is insufficient space to discuss all the performances observed and recorded for this study. Therefore, the emphasis is on four features included in all performances of ceremonies at the institutions in this study, and a further one that relates to the development of alumni networks evident at all ceremonies and offstage except at Hargreaves:

- Ceremonial processions
- Ceremonial music
- Ceremonial speaking
- Presentation of students
- Development of Alumni Networks

Few studies about educational change have drawn on actor-network theory; rather, much of this literature has focused on social rather than socio-material aspects of change. In contrast, the framework of inquiry informing this study allows analysis of the socio-material relations and dynamics associated with implementation and sustainability of change (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010). Accordingly, the chapter explores the implementation and consequences of making planned changes to degree ceremonies. The way performances of ceremonies were perpetuated in different conditions of growth and how they were entangled with marketing activity is considered throughout. The emphasis is predominantly on Rose University where most access was gained.

The following section discusses the effects that were produced by ceremonial processions, music, speaking and the presentation of students during the ceremonies in this study. These features occurred at all the ceremonies in this study. It goes on to demonstrate how the actants involved and preparation and maintenance work discussed earlier in Chapters Five and Six contributed to the production of these effects and how they were interpreted.

### **7.1. Ceremonial Processions**

At all the ceremonies in this study there was a ceremonial procession in and a ceremonial recession out. Observations highlighted similarities and differences in terms of the people and institutional roles involved, the academic attire worn, and the routes they took through venues to ascend and descend from the stage. Across all the processions observed, the presiding officer was placed at the rear of processions going in, and this placement and ordering was inversed when they recessed out (see fig. 14 below). In each procession, the presiding officer was preceded by a mace carried by a

bedel. The repetitive placement, ordering and performance of this specific part of the ceremonial procession was perpetuated across different institutions.



Fig. 14: The Chancellor Processing into the Hall, Rose University, 14.7.15, 11.05am

Where collaborative institutional partnership arrangements were in place there were often two heads of institutions present. In such cases adjustments were made to the processional order which varied according to whether the ceremonies took place in the UK or overseas. At ceremonies held by the associate colleges in the UK, a senior officer from Rose positioned close to the rear of the procession was preceded by the Rose mace, with the Head of the College bringing up the rear. In the context of the franchise relationship in India, the presiding officer from Rose University brought up the rear of the procession and was preceded by a replica of the Rose mace. At Hibiscus University ceremonies, the Chancellor from Hibiscus brought up the rear of the procession, preceded by the Hibiscus mace. A distinctive feature of the Hibiscus procession was the presence of a bodyguard walking alongside the Chancellor.

Academical attire worn by senior officers was described earlier in Chapter Five.

Academical dress worn by staff in academic processions indicated the highest type of

degree they had been awarded and the awarding institution. This attire therefore reflected and enacted their academic credentials and institutional history rather than just the aesthetic merits of the dress itself which was mentioned most by interview respondents in this study. On this basis one could argue that staff in procession at Rose University and Colossus University were more highly qualified and from a more varied range of institutions than at the remaining four institutions. However, in Chapter Five evidence suggested that making such assumptions based on academic attire can sometimes be precarious and in Chapter Six it was noted that not everyone in the procession was an academic. This finding suggests that using academic attire in processions as an indicator of the status and institutional origins of staff should be treated with some caution. Nevertheless, the evidence does imply that the attire worn by Chancellors in procession in combination with the mace serve to intensify the effects of authority and hierarchy. As such, material actants are not passive bystanders but actively enrolled in the generation of these effects. The addition of music as an accompaniment to processions contributed to intensifying the effects they generated.

## **7.2. Ceremonial Music**

Music was played at all the ceremonies and included processional and choral music, fanfares, and national anthems. However, there were other sounds heard at the ceremonies in this sample, such as applause, cheering, talking, babies crying and culturally situated sounds. For example, at a Rose ceremony a lady ululated as her daughter crossed the stage and at Lotus ceremonies a Sanskrit invocation to knowledge was sung. Degree ceremonies are rich soundscapes; an aspect that has received little attention in previous studies. Yet all the interviews contained

references to music and sounds at ceremonies with nine respondents explicitly saying that music was an important feature in degree ceremonies. As one marshal said:

If there's no music it [degree ceremony] falls flat.

Marshal 2, Rose University, 26.3.14

Only Rose University used live music and three senior officers at Rose who had attended many ceremonies at other institutions said they preferred it.

The organiser at Rose University described how certain types of music were particularly associated with ceremonies:

I think it's to do with volume, I think it's because things like brass bands, fanfares or organs are associated with processions and momentous occasions so you could associate it with a wedding or a coronation...so it's in the same group of very important formal occasions and so it perhaps sets the right tone for the occasion.

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13

This observation highlights how music at degree ceremonies is not an isolated feature, but has capacity to generate associations with other formal and momentous occasions held outside higher education. This is particularly noticeable in relation to processional music. However, whilst music was mentioned by most interviewees, there was little reference to the musicians, instruments, compact discs, music stands, microphones, technicians, loud speakers, or sheets of music that were carefully prepared, organised, positioned and maintained in order to generate it. The analysis showed how the focus of attention was predominantly on processional music and national anthems.

### 7.2.1. Processional Music

At all the ceremonies except those held at Rose University, where organ music was played live, piped music heralded the arrival of the academic procession. In each case except at Hibiscus the piped music was organ music. Based on their experience at a previous institution a senior officer at Rose suggested that organ music varied and generated different effects:

I remember my first one I mean it felt like I was at a funeral not a graduation so we had conversations with the cathedral about moving from heavy Wagner to lighter Mendelsohn

Senior Officer 4, Rose University, 24.6.14.

This respondent suggests that the type of music used in degree ceremonies should be celebratory and make positive associations.

The Rose organiser involved in establishing new ceremonies in India described how they chose the processional music for degree ceremonies there:

I listened to two CDs with sixteen tracks on each CD - I was thinking about the length of the piece because that was actually quite important to me, and also the pace of the piece because it's quite important that as the ceremonial procession moves sedately that it starts at the beginning of the music and hopefully by the last couple of bars the procession has arrived on the platform ready to start the ceremony, so if something was four or five minutes long clearly that was unsuitable and if it was thirty seconds long that was unsuitable so I chose a fairly short piece for going in and one that I thought was quite uplifting and had that sort of effect and then the exit music was a little longer

because we take the academic procession out but then we follow with the graduate procession so I wanted longer for the music to be playing out.

Organiser, Rose University, 8.3.14.

The analysis demonstrates how the lead institutional partner drove the design of this ceremony, and how this was reflected in the choice of music. Evidence presented in this study suggests that the repetitive use of classical music as an accompaniment for academic processions perpetuated a sense of similarity across different institutions in the UK and overseas, even though the choice of classical music varied. How the organiser at Rose chose the music also drew attention to the way the music was aligned with the timing and procedures of ceremonies. Close observations of processions at Rose revealed complex relations and interactions between processions and ceremonial music:

...as soon as the brass players see the Chancellor and his party, they begin the Chancellor's piece of music, and we time it so that the piece of music lasts till the presiding officer arrives at their throne and that's the climax of the music which brings it to the opening moment of the ceremony

Organiser, Rose University, 16.9.13.

In this case music drew attention to the arrival of the presiding officer entering the hall at the rear of the procession thereby adding to and intensifying effects of institutional authority generated by the mace, the Chancellor's robes, the Chancellor, and the way they are positioned and ordered. The cessation of music as the Chancellor arrived at their distinctive chair provided another non-verbal cue indicating the ceremony had started.

### 7.2.2. National Anthems

Interview respondents and observations provided evidence of national anthems being included at degree ceremonies held in South Africa, Malaysia, India, Wales and England. The national anthem was not included at ceremonies held by Hargreaves College and Rock College. Colossus University had ceased including the national anthem except at ceremonies held in Wales where the Welsh national anthem was sung. The respondent from Colossus said:

I personally think that's a shame but that's...it's not my opinion that counts

Organiser, Colossus University, 24.9.13

There was some controversy at Rose University about the inclusion of the national anthem in degree ceremonies. Eighteen respondents mentioned it, of whom five were adamantly against it whilst ten respondents were in favour and three had no clear preference. One of those in favour mentioned how including the national anthem reflected Rose University's connections to H.M. The Queen through its foundation by Royal Charter and because the monarch was the Visitor of the university. Of the two who did not express a clear preference, one said they thought it had been more appropriate when the first Chancellor, who is a member of the royal family, was presiding over ceremonies, whilst the other said it would be better if more people sang the national anthem and joined in.

The most perplexing issue for respondents at Rose seemed to be how international students related to the inclusion of the British national anthem. Many overseas ceremonies included national anthems but these institutions did not tend to have the same diversity of international students as Rose University.

Evidence in this study suggests that as Rose University has become more internationally diverse, including the British national anthem has left some members of staff at Rose feeling uncomfortable. Nevertheless, more of those interviewed perceived its inclusion in ceremonies to positively contribute to the image and identity of the institution.

The use of the British national anthem as a piece of music associated with national identity is traced back to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, London in 1745 (Morgan, 2014). The band leader there arranged for 'God Save the King' to be played after the performance of a play. It was sung as a sign of support for King George II whose government troops had just lost a battle against the Jacobites in Scotland, although ironically earlier it had been associated with a Jacobite drinking song (Ibid).

However, in the eighteenth century it was so successful that the idea soon caught on in other countries overseas. There are older versions of national anthems but their popularity and use as unifying national symbols is most closely associated with the mid eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The British national anthem is closely associated with the royal family but national anthems around the world have many different associations with their countries. However Morgan (2014) demonstrates how a Jacobite drinking song has developed to become a 'pillar of the British establishment' as a result of "a dynamic relationship between literature and society where each is shaped by the other" (Morgan, 2014, p.70)

Ancient universities such as St Andrews and many others in western countries have tended to avoid this contentious issue regarding the inclusion of a national anthem by using the Gaudeamus Igitur instead. The Gaudeamus is a light-hearted song poking

fun at university life which is thought to have originated in the thirteenth century and is sung in Latin.

### **7.3. Ceremonial Speaking**

Various actors had speaking roles during the ceremonies observed in this study.

Presenters had the task of announcing degrees being conferred, and the names of students being presented, public orators had the task of presenting an honorary graduand by delivering an oration, and honorary graduates gave speeches in return.

At ceremonies held at Rose, Hibiscus and Lotus presiding officers used ‘performative utterances’ to confer degrees and open and close ceremonies.

#### **7.3.1. Performative Utterances**

A performative utterance is not just someone saying something but “is part of the doing of an action” (Austin, J. L. 1962, p.5). Performative utterances do not describe or report anything, they are not true or false, but they are relational.

Austin (1962) discussed how the conditions had to be right for an utterance to be able to make something happen. This resonates with actor-network theory and Denis and Pontille (2010) who argue that it is only through the placement, ordering and performative relations of actors that particular effects are generated. For example, announcing ‘I now pronounce you man and wife’ over to two teddy bears in a playroom is different to the same utterance being announced in a church with all the trappings associated with weddings. How performative utterances were used in this study is briefly described below in section 7.4 in relation to the presentation of students.

The focus in this section is the speeches given by presiding officers at degree ceremonies and the use of performative utterances during the presentation of students at ceremonies held at Rose, Hibiscus and Lotus.

### 7.3.2. Ceremonial Speeches

Speeches were given at all the ceremonies in this study. At Rose, Colossus and Hargreaves these were given by the presiding officers; at Rock, Hibiscus and Lotus where collaborative institutional partnership arrangements were in place then both the head of the local institution and the visiting senior officer conferring degrees from Rose gave speeches. Speeches were variously given at the beginning of ceremonies, in their midst and at the end.

Opening speeches were first introduced at Rose in 2005 when the University's second Chancellor was appointed. The first Chancellor did not make speeches during her tenure. The analysis suggests that in recent years the style and content of speeches given at Rose had changed. Speeches delivered by the second chancellor of the university tended to have large unscripted elements to them. After they stepped down from the role in 2014 the speeches appeared to become more scripted and the balance of content changed.

During the period of this study, a senior officer at Rose University would write a speech that was then used by senior colleagues acting as presiding officers at degree ceremonies. This resulted in perpetuating a series of consistent messages across numerous degree ceremonies held at Rose University. However, one of the effects generated by this approach was mentioned by members of staff who had ceremonial roles at Rose. One summed it up as follows:

...obviously you sit through five ceremonies, you hear the same thing again and again.

Ceremonial Officer 7, Rose University, 14.3.14

Students and their supporters heard the opening speech usually only once, and therefore the effect was different for them because they heard it as if it were the first time it had been delivered. In contrast, ceremonial officers and academic staff who attended numerous ceremonies heard the same speech repeatedly and this perpetuation of a consistent experience frequently generated boredom.

The content and style of the opening speeches heard at ceremonies in this study varied. At Rock and Hargreaves opening speeches were given by people described as 'successful' or 'leaders' in business who described their routes to career success in inspirational terms to the students.

Both the Head of the Institute and the visiting senior officer from Rose gave speeches at the Lotus Institute along with a visiting speaker from a leading media organisation in India. The content of these speeches focused on the institutional aspirations of Lotus Institute, and the reputation and credentials of Rose University as an institutional partner. All the speakers made positive links between degrees and employability, before congratulating students on their achievements.

There were seven speeches given at the Hibiscus ceremony held in 2013 which comprised: opening speeches from each of the presiding officers from Hibiscus and Rose, closing speeches from both, an oration for an honorary degree given by the presiding officer from Rose in honour of the presiding officer from Hibiscus, an acceptance speech from the presiding officer at Hibiscus upon receipt of an honorary degree, and a speech given by a graduating student. As the closing speeches were

given by the presiding officers of both institutions, the weariness of the speech gives as well as the audience was palpable. For example, the audience started applauding loudly before the end of the speeches; a clear non-verbal cue that indicated they were ready to leave.

One or more speeches given at all the ceremonies in this study included positive links to employability. However, conditions of employability vary around the world. In the USA and the UK there are compelling arguments (Brown, 2000, Brown and Hesketh, 2004, Tomlinson, 2008) to suggest that a degree does not necessarily lead to graduate level employment. This sheds light on how speeches at degree ceremonies in this study were designed to transmit a positive message to students, even though messages about employability did not always reflect the local graduate jobs market.

### 7.3.3. Marketing through Speeches

At Rose University, the opening speech was the main speech given by the presiding officer at degree ceremonies. The senior officer who wrote the speeches used by all the presiding officers at Rose University during the period of this study described the content of an opening speech in the following way:

...obviously you start off with the kind of introductory speech that's meant to set the scene for the parents and the students 'look what you've achieved' etc. and it's also meant to put it into a global context in a sense of you know Rose University's place. It's also meant to showcase the university a little, particularly to the parents but also to reflect the student's broader perspective on the university. There are (it depends who you ask), some people who would rather it be less of a 'sell' on the university at that point. I think that's them being very British, in the sense that you've got a captive audience why

would you not want to hear what you've done in the university and the rating of the university because you're making them feel good about it, so there's a little bit of people who feel different about that but you'd have no hesitation in an American university them telling you that.

Senior Officer 3, Rose University, 19.6.14.

This description highlighted how the content of opening speeches at Rose University included elements related to the reputation and credibility of the university in a global context. According to Room (2000) the reputation and credibility of an institution is linked to the credentials [education, qualifications, resources and facilities] that an institution awards and provides. He suggests that processes linked to the development of mass participation in higher education are influencing international standard setting and, in effect, increasing marketing activity in higher education. I believe this is reflected in the statement given by the senior officer and speech writer at Rose University above, which suggests that speeches at degree ceremonies provide useful opportunities for such activity and to reach diverse stakeholders.

However, not all members of staff were comfortable with the emergence of this activity:

In terms of speeches without speaking about any particular speaker they can become a bit corporate and I think that's a mistake and I think judging how much you celebrate the university discreetly without saying 'we are top ten' 'we are x this amount of money you know' I think is a fine art and I'm not always sure everyone gets it right. The (second) Chancellor always gave very homely speeches that went down perfectly well with the students.

Senior Officer 7, Rose University, 11.6.14.

The view held by this senior officer is that the balance and content of speeches should be focused on the students and that any messages related to the reputation and credentials of the university be included and delivered more discreetly. However, the findings in this study suggest that conditions of growth discussed earlier in Chapter Three are contributing to increasing marketing activity in higher education. I suggest that as more higher education institutions open, giving stakeholders more choices, institutions are increasingly having to find ways to transmit claims about their reputation, quality, and standards. The analysis demonstrates that degree ceremony speeches provide an opportunity for institutions to do this.

The question left largely unanswered is what constitutes a 'quality' higher education institution? And how do less prestigious institutions transmit their reputation and credentials through degree ceremonies? There was evidence in this study that showed how some higher education institutions had sought to enhance their reputation through their degree ceremonies:

...of course the point about if you're up and coming as a university and you've been poorly ranked historically you want to create the trappings of a quality institution and a degree ceremony's absolutely at the heart of that but then you also have these trade-offs of how traditional do you want it to be? And how much? because you can go too far and it can become parody or slightly pompous so you can't have them with this a new up and coming institution doing all these interesting, exciting, innovative things on the one hand and then having a degree ceremony necessarily that feels like it's trying to ape Oxford or something like that, so there's a kind of interesting balance about it but if it feels too modern or too lightweight then you know it doesn't give off that kind of gravitas.

This respondent suggested that the quality of a degree ceremony contributed to the perceived quality of an institution. Evidence presented earlier in Chapters Five and Six suggests that ‘quality’ can be culturally situated, perceived and enacted in different ways. Therefore, how is the term quality being applied in this instance? The respondent goes on to suggest that quality is related to a degree ceremony being able to generate gravitas. I would argue that material actants, such as ceremonial mace and academical dress discussed previously, provide new institutions with opportunities to make connections to the rich traditions and heritage of higher education with which ancient universities are more directly associated. Although in the case of academical dress, some new designs make these connections more successfully than others (Groves, 2011).

Chapters Five, Six and section 7.2 above, also demonstrate how the inclusion of material actants such as ceremonial mace, in combination with other actants such as academical dress worn by presiding officers, can contribute to effects of institutional authority at ceremonies held by much younger higher education institutions. These effects were further reinforced when students were presented to presiding officers during ceremonies.

#### **7.4. Presentation of Students during Ceremonies**

At ceremonies in this study students were presented individually and crossed a stage to shake hands with a presiding officer. However, this seemingly consistent feature hid a cornucopia of details, actants, interpretations, and meanings. For example, there was a distinct difference between Rose, Lotus and Hibiscus ceremonies and those held at the other institutions in this sample because the presiding officer at these

institutions conferred degrees upon them during ceremonies. This distinction was raised by a senior officer at Rose University:

...coming out of your research it will be interesting to know at different universities just when that point is [conferral of degrees], because I know at several universities now the ceremony doesn't have any formal conveying responsibilities, it's been delegated to other parts of the institution and has changed over time... in many institutions it's a ceremony for marking it [graduation] rather than a formal conferral.

Senior Officer 3, Rose University, 19.6.14.

At Rose University students were presented individually at undergraduate ceremonies by college and award, and by the type of degree being awarded at postgraduate ceremonies. After one group of students receiving the same award had been presented they would be asked to stand as a group and the presiding officer would confer the degree as follows:

By my authority as Chancellor of the University I confer on these members of the [College/Faculty] the degrees for which they have been presented

This was the point at which students became graduates of the university. The words used by the presiding officer enacted the conferral and legitimised it on behalf of the university, and as such, fit Austin's (1962) description of a performative utterance mentioned earlier. At Rose University, the presiding officer's right to enact the conferral of degrees on behalf of the university was laid down in the Royal Charter, a legal document, which incorporated the university in 1964. Students were granted permission by Senate to graduate at the next appropriate ceremony or could graduate in absentia. The presiding officer's authority to confer degrees was provided by the

Charter and supported before and during the ceremony by a complex network of actants together with the careful preparation and maintenance work described earlier in Chapters Five and Six.

The enactment of the conferral of degrees during ceremonies distinguished graduation ceremonies from presentation ceremonies which did not include this feature. A point the organiser at Colossus University reinforced:

At Colossus University the people who are attending the ceremony are already graduates. They've had their degrees conferred some weeks before. The purpose of it actually is to be presented as a graduate. Sort of to congratulate them giving them a moment of glory.

Organiser, Colossus University, 24.9.13

As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two a presentation ceremony is considered the first time that a graduate is presented in front of members of the Senate and Academic Board in the academic attire they are entitled to wear as one of its graduates.

Hargreaves and Rock College ceremonies were presentation ceremonies which had no conferral utterances.

At Lotus Institute and Hibiscus University the distinction between a graduation ceremony and a presentation ceremony was more difficult to ascertain. At both these institutions conferrals were made; at Lotus by the presiding officer from Rose University, and at Hibiscus by the Chancellor of Hibiscus University. However, when checking Senate minutes at Rose University in relation to this point, the wording was ambiguous and it was difficult to determine precisely whether these students graduated before or during ceremonies. Such ambiguity provides institutions with some flexibility when managing processes associated with graduating students.

If students have already graduated beforehand then there is no need for a further conferral during the ceremony. However, unlike presentation ceremonies the graduation of students during a ceremony provides institutions with opportunities to publicly display and transmit their power and authority to confer degrees.

Consistent across the ceremonies in this study is that all students were presented individually and shook the hand of the presiding officer or, in the case of Hibiscus University, shook the hands of two presiding officers. This was compared to ceremonies in the USA by a senior officer at Rose University:

The other key thing is the moment that each individual student gets, this is a very UK view, it wouldn't be true in an American University, the individual moment that each student gets when they're passing into the kind of graduate alumni brotherhood/sisterhood of the university basically...I think that's a very important element to it [ceremony].

Senior Officer 3, Rose University, 19.6.14.

Wilson's (1952) account of six ceremonies in the USA describes the challenge of trying to create some intimacy for students when having to accommodate large numbers of students at ceremonies. In one case, he describes how nine lines of students advance to the stage where a presiding officer has the task of distributing four thousand scrolls in fifteen minutes (p.93). Wilson (1952) and Magolda (2003) argue that the intimacy and authenticity of ceremonies is compromised by such large-scale ceremonies. The scale of ceremonies held in many institutions in the USA is yet to be experienced by most institutions in the UK.

The largest and lengthiest ceremony in this sample was the Hibiscus University ceremony held in 2013, which was two and a half hours long and included the

presentation of 683 students. This ceremony bore the hallmarks of the large, lengthy ceremonies described by Wilson (1952) and Magolda (2003) but differed in two ways. First, some local members of staff on stage had mobile phones that they looked at, and in one case talked on. It was noticeable that western members of staff did not do the same. This suggests that behaviour on stage at degree ceremonies is culturally situated and learnt, and highlights the arrival and use of mobile phones to degree ceremonies. Second, fading applause from the audience communicated their weariness. Not long after this Hibiscus ceremony a decision was taken to move from one large ceremony to two smaller ones, showing in this instance how growing numbers of students were accommodated by increasing the number of ceremonies. This study reinforces those from the USA that suggest accommodating large numbers of students in degree ceremonies compromises the intimacy and authenticity of these events. Yet despite the challenges large scale ceremonies present, institutions continue to provide them. This suggests degree ceremonies are important to the institutions hosting them as well as to the students and supporters who attend them. The mutual benefits of degree ceremonies to institutions and students were evident in the analysis regarding the development of alumni networks at these events.

### **7.5. The Development of Alumni Networks at Degree Ceremonies**

Developing alumni networks through degree ceremonies is a familiar feature of ceremonies in the USA and was briefly mentioned by Wilson (1952) and Magolda (2003). However, the analysis suggests it was a relatively new feature at ceremonies in the UK at the time of this study. All the institutions encouraged graduating students to join their alumni in speeches given at their degree ceremonies. There were articles about the benefits associated with joining alumni networks in programme guides at all the institutions except Hargreaves, described further below. At

ceremonies attended in the UK there were stalls at venues where students could sign up to join an institution's alumni network, see fig. 15 below.



Fig. 15: Example of an Alumni Stand at a Degree Ceremony, 10.7.14

Hargreaves College adopted a different approach to the other institutions by providing a scroll for each student, see fig. 16.



Fig. 16: Scrolls for Students at Hargreaves College, 24.10.13

I picked up a scroll after the ceremony to see what was written inside and found the following:

On behalf of all the staff at the University Centre at Hargreaves College, I congratulate you on your success and wish you well for the future. I hope that you will continue your association with the University. We would be delighted to welcome you back as a member of our Alumni Association or to pursue further study.

Observation of Degree Ceremony, Hargreaves College, 24.10.13.

The scrolls were ideally placed next to the steps going up to the stage during the performance of the ceremony so students could pick one up before being presented. However, the signage above the scrolls and general maintenance in relation to them was not ideal, see fig.17 below,



Fig. 17: Placement of Scrolls at Hargreaves College Ceremony, 24.10.13

Developing alumni networks at degree ceremonies was not wholly popular with some of the respondents. One senior officer interviewed at Rose said,

It's really useful to make sure that alumni give us connections to the university to help us get our students into jobs... I think it's easier if we talk about the

connection in terms of how they can help the next generation of students, I just find that personally a bit easier. That's not quite as corporate but there's a fine line between looking tacky it's a ceremony, it's a tradition and if you stick corporate too tackily on, it just probably devalues what you're trying to do.

Senior Officer 7, Rose University, 11.6.14.

Another senior officer at Rose mentioned one of the benefits of developing their alumni networks through degree ceremonies:

There's also been a big fashion I would say in the last five years for other sorts of developments in terms of the proceedings which has been around the innovation of alumni speakers and different institutions I've worked in have done it differently.

Senior Officer 5, Rose University, 17.7.14

Except for Hargreaves College, information about how to join alumni networks featured in the programme guides left on each seat in the venues at the ceremonies observed in the UK. The information focused on benefits that could be accrued by students and did not mention benefits for institutions. Benefits for students included:

- Being part of a network
- Opportunity to advertise your webpage for free via a website and blog hub (Rock College only)
- Keeping up to date with news about the institution
- Future invitations to alumni events
- Ongoing careers support
- Access to an alumni magazine

The interview data from Rose University provided some evidence about how the senior officers there saw the benefits that could be gained from graduates joining their alumni network. These included:

- Raising funds
- Developing long term relationships that span generations of the same families
- Development of alumni communities overseas with partner institutions
- Help with collecting data to complete destination of leavers in higher education returns
- Provide connections to businesses that might help with career opportunities for graduates

Two senior officers at Rose University mentioned they were uncomfortable with how students were approached to join the alumni, one said:

I think we've almost put it in everybody's speech and I find if you're celebrating their achievement wishing them well on their career paths and then towards the end - it gets to 'by the way we've got this alumni stand outside please go and sign up and start to think about contributing to the university' it's tricky, so I think there are multiple purposes to it but it is a celebration really you know. I find it difficult to compare old and new universities on this

Senior Officer 6, Rose University, 3.6.14.

Older universities also seem to be seeking to enrol graduates to their alumni network through their degree ceremonies. A programme guide collected from the University of Oxford during this study had a page dedicated to alumni business. It was entitled 'Life after Oxford' which was different to the titles in the other programme guides which included the word 'alumni'. Unlike the benefits mentioned in the programme

guides for students in this study, at Oxford they also offered graduates continued access to online educational resources like JSTOR, access to podcasts of seminars, and the opportunity to set up a personalised alumni email account.

One of the senior officers interviewed at Rose described their experience at a former university and suggested there was another reason degree ceremonies were a useful focal point for institutions:

I asked that they put careers in there as well because it's the perfect time to pick them [students] up and that was sort of 'oh but we don't do careers at graduation' and it was like well 'why not?' because it's the time when people say goodbye to the university and contact with careers is absolutely key, if you look at the destination of leavers results they were signing up three to four thousand, in fact one year nearly five thousand graduating students who they would then be in contact with, and then once we got the destination leavers survey there was a relationship with a lot of the people who graduated so it really helped them doing those returns, ...there was definitely a little bit of reticence from marketing, it wasn't about money making, it wasn't a big commercial thing so in fact if anything the alumni were a bit reticent and the careers people were a bit reticent so we were making them stop people as they were walking along saying 'hello' and signing them up and getting their names and whatever and so they didn't like that at all.

Senior Officer 4, Rose University, 24.6.14

This suggests that degree ceremonies provide a useful focal point during which institutions can develop and grow their alumni networks, enabling them to stay in touch with students after they have left. In this example, they also helped an

institution to collect destination leaver results which contribute to institutional performance indicators in the UK and are published. These returns are also linked to HEFCE grant funding for institutions in England. In summary, there are benefits to be gained for both institutions and students through alumni networks.

## **7.6. How Planned Change Impact on Degree Ceremonies**

Literature about rituals often mentions that their repetitious nature contributes to the patterns and predictability they generate (Sennett, 2012, Myerhoff, 1984). Evidence presented in Chapter Six suggests that a great deal of work goes into achieving these effects by experienced preparation and maintenance workers.

However, previous studies of degree ceremonies have not explored in any depth what happens when planned changes are introduced to ceremonies, or what impact such changes can have on the preparation, maintenance and performance of ceremonies. What follows is a description of what happened at Rose University when planned changes were made to student conferral groups in December 2013. Until this point, the ceremonial process had changed little since the university's first degree ceremony in 1965. This was evident from a review of the first fifty years of programme guides which captured the ceremonial process as follows:

Ceremonial Procession to Fanfare of Trumpets

Conferral of Students (West side of Hall)

Conferral of Students (East side of Hall)

Honorary Degrees or Awards

National Anthem

Recession to Music

The change was introduced amidst other information in an email from organisers to the marshals and master of ceremonies as follows:

The conferral of degrees has been divided based on type of award. On the whole, this means the conferral groups are different sizes and they do not fit neatly into each half of the hall. The split is clearly noted in the ceremony scripts and hopefully this won't present any issues.

Email from organisers to marshals, 6 December 2013, Rose University.

At around the same time three other changes were introduced which generated a great deal of debate and some criticism amongst staff before implementation. The analysis suggests these did not generate the same disruptive effects in relation to the preparation, maintenance and performance of ceremonies as the changes made to conferral groups.

There was some discussion about the changes to conferral groups at a meeting and rehearsal before the ceremonies. However, the general consensus amongst experienced marshals was that they would be able to accommodate changes to conferral groups relatively easily.

However, observation notes taken at the postgraduate ceremonies on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013 recorded the difficulties that experienced marshals had as they tried gesturing to different groups of students to stand, whilst simultaneously attempting to indicate to others to remain seated. For a less experienced marshal, accommodating the changes proved more challenging, forcing them to rely on the ceremonial script. The repetition and simplicity of the ceremonial process before the change to conferral groups meant that once the pattern of the ceremony had been learnt the script was largely redundant and functioned as an aide memoire. When the change to conferral

groups was introduced it became more important, but because the ceremonial process was no longer repetitive and consistent but different for each ceremony, the traditional layout of the ceremonial script made it difficult to see and follow the iterative changes for each ceremony. From December 2013, what had been a repetitive and consistent ceremonial process was now one prone to change, and open to variation, and more difficult to master for newcomers.

The effects of changes made to conferral groups were not visible to most of the students and their guests who were probably attending a Rose University ceremony for the first time. However, the added level of complexity presented challenges for those tasked with maintaining the ritual during the performance. Observation notes taken on the day of the postgraduate ceremonies record mistakes made in all the ceremonies except one, where the conferral groups fitted into the previous ceremonial process. The effects were palpable behind the scenes offstage too in December 2013, where the jovial atmosphere of July 2013 was replaced with one characterised by complaints, grumbling and anxiety. At the end of the day one of the team summed up the day by saying:

I feel I got through today rather than enjoyed it.

One of the Organisers, Rose University, 11.12.13

The impact these changes had on ceremonial support staff became more apparent during the weeks and months after the postgraduate ceremonies. One marshal decided it was time to step back from the role and at a meeting in March 2014 to discuss practical challenges associated with changes made to conferral groups some marshals made their feelings felt by not attending.

Several changes emerged from this meeting that attempted to accommodate the variations in conferral groups that now occurred at each ceremony. First, there was a review of the ceremonial scripts and the marshal's scripts which resulted in a re-design. Scripts for ceremonies thereafter were individually tailored to the different permutation of conferral groups and additional awards that had been introduced in 2013. It was also decided that seating plans would be colour coded to highlight where different conferral groups were sitting, which also indicated to marshals how many stops and starts there would be in each ceremony. The seating plan also marked a seat for the assistant marshal to sit in during the middle of the ceremony when awards were being conferred. On occasion a seat would not be available for the assistant marshal. In such cases they had to walk to the east side of the hall to wait until the awards had been conferred in the middle of the ceremonies before moving back to the central aisle again. A previously simple, consistent process that was easy to master had become a more complex, changeable affair which lacked the repetitious nature often attributed to rituals. Those responsible for maintaining the smooth running of performances had a more complex and variable task than before, and those involved in preparing seating plans and scripts acquired additional extra work requiring more iterations than previously. The net effects generated by changing conferral groups was to reduce simplicity and repetition, and increase complexity and variability.

The introduction of applause, movement of awards from the end of the ceremony to the middle, and the introduction of additional awards in 2013 did not change the fundamental process of the ceremony in the same way that the changes made to conferral groups did, yet they drew more attention and criticism before implementation.

This evidence highlights how a change that was introduced that received less criticism and concern before implementation generated more disruption and controversy during implementation and afterwards.

## **7.7. Overview**

Previous studies have tended to focus on the experience and enactment of social actors during the performance of ceremonies, with agentic effects previously attributed to physical artefacts and staging being moved into the background (Magolda, 2003). The framework of inquiry applied in this study does not make the same separation. Instead it sees social and material actants, and how they are prepared and maintained before ceremonies, continuing to contribute during the performance of ceremonies.

For example, the effect of institutional authority and hierarchy associated earlier with ceremonial mace, Chancellors and Chancellor's robes, and the particular processional order of these actants mentioned in Chapters Five and Six, were perpetuated during the performance across all the ceremonies in this study. However, the processions did not enter in silence; they were accompanied by music, an actor mentioned but not explored in previous studies (Wilson, 1952, Magolda, 2003). The analysis demonstrated how music helped intensify effects of authority and hierarchy when the presiding officer entered in procession. The timing of processional music was carefully prepared and maintained to end as the presiding officer arrived at their seat situated centre stage. In this way, processional music was not merely a melodic and tuneful accompaniment but acted as a non-verbal cue in relation to other actants signaling the arrival of the presiding officer, and preparing the audience for the start of the ceremony once the processional party had ascended the stage. Evidence in this

study found that processional music created associations for participants with other momentous ceremonial occasions outside higher education, reinforcing its effect. Other music included during the performance of ceremonies was shown to be adaptable and culturally situated such as the local innovations to music at Colossus ceremonies or the Sanskrit invocation to knowledge sung at Lotus ceremonies in India.

A point of contention for some at Rose University was the inclusion of the British national anthem during ceremonies. The analysis suggests these concerns are being driven by increasing student mobility resulting in Rose University having a more internationally diverse student body than other institutions in this study. However, the majority of respondents were nevertheless in favour of retaining the British national anthem. National anthems were also sung at Lotus Institute in India, Hibiscus University in Malaysia, and Colossus ceremonies in Wales. Rarely mentioned in the data collected were the musicians, instruments, sheet music, music stands, microphones, technicians, and loud speakers that generated music at these ceremonies. Like other material actants, they appeared to be taken for granted during the performance.

Focusing on music drew attention to the broader rich soundscapes of degree ceremonies, what noises and sounds were heard, who got to speak and who didn't (Hendy, 2013). Most of the participants at degree ceremonies did not have speaking roles, but presiding officers, heads of institutions, distinguished guests and public orators did make speeches and where collaborative institutional partnerships existed there were more speeches. At one particularly lengthy ceremony the audience interrupted two speeches towards the end of the two and half hour event by applauding loudly in the middle of them signaling their hope that the ceremony was

ending. The speeches weren't generally designed to entertain but rather to transmit the reputation and credentials of institutions and to congratulate students on their achievements. Room (2000) has suggested that higher education institutions compete within a reputational hierarchy in at least four ways, through formal inspections, assessments and audits of their work, their excellence in scholarship and research, through their links with more esteemed institutions and finally by appealing to tradition through ancient ceremonies (Room, 2000, p.106). Few studies have explored how ceremonies play a part in perpetuating reputational hierarchy across higher education systems. However, in this study it was apparent that pervasive methods were being deployed to display, enhance and transmit institutional reputation and credentials through the performance of degree ceremonies. This was evident in the content of the speeches; for instance, all generated positive messages related to employability even though this positivity did not reflect the variabilities in graduate job markets in different places around the world.

Further evidence in this study showed how speeches at institutions in the UK were increasingly being used for marketing purposes. This was evident by the inclusion of references to ranking systems and comparisons being made between institutions. In collaborative institutional partnerships, less prestigious institutional partners drew on the reputation and credentials of their more highly ranked associates in their speeches. This served to enact and reinforce the institutional stratification being generated that Room (2000) refers to.

At Rose University where numerous ceremonies were performed in the UK, and at degrees conferred at other institutions in the UK and overseas, there was concern about achieving consistent messages across multiple sites through speeches given at ceremonies. This concern coincided with a period of institutional and international

growth and was also noted earlier in Chapter Six in relation to Colossus University ceremonies. The significance and meaning of consistency is discussed further in the concluding chapter.

The performance of ceremonies in this study differed on one crucial point. Three ceremonies contained performative utterances while the rest did not. At Rose, Lotus and Hibiscus presiding officers enacted the conferral of degrees during ceremonies which distinguished these ceremonies as graduation ceremonies rather than presentation ceremonies. The students entered the ceremonies as graduands and left as graduates. This distinction was clearly documented at Rose where Senate minutes reflected the process clearly but was more ambiguous in the minutes regarding ceremonies held at Lotus Institute in India and Hibiscus University in Malaysia. The conferral of degrees during Rose ceremonies was not an isolated act but involved interdependent work beforehand, mentioned earlier in Chapter Six. During the performance, the conferral required the enlistment of the presiding officer, their elaborate robes, the chair they were seated on, their position on stage, and being preceded by a mace in procession. The rich mix of social and material actants, their associations, and how they were placed and ordered contributed to the enactment of conferral, and served to reinforce the presiding officer's position of authority to confer degrees on behalf of the university. The conferral of degrees also provided students and their supporters with a distinct moment of transformation in which to mark their change in status and celebrate their achievement. Individual presentation of students as they crossed the stage to shake hands with the presiding officer was met with applause and provided students and their supporters with a moment of public recognition for their achievements. These moments of transformation and recognition

resonate with the transformational focus of rites of passage written about elsewhere (Van Gennep, 1960).

In his earlier study, Magolda (2003) suggests degree ceremonies are exiting rituals. However, I would suggest that degree ceremonies do not necessarily imply that a student is leaving an institution, but rather that they are changing their relationship with it.

The development of alumni networks at degree ceremonies has been evident for some years in the USA (Wilson, 1952, Magolda, 2003) though evidence presented here suggests this activity has only recently appeared at ceremonies in the UK.

The benefits for students joining the alumni network of their alma mater were positively promoted in speeches, programme guides and stalls; less visible were the benefits accrued by institutions. The analysis in this study drew attention to these benefits as well as showing how different institutions are assembling networks. Most apparent were the mutual benefits associated with continuing relationships between students and institutions, even though some members of staff at Rose did not approve of using degree ceremonies to develop these networks.

In most cases degree ceremonies appeared to run smoothly to those who infrequently attended them. However, those more regularly involved in the enactment and maintenance of performances were more attuned to spotting anomalies, mistakes and potential disruptions and could often discretely pre-empt them or at least minimize their impact.

During this study a number of planned intentional changes were introduced to ceremonies at Rose University. Three changes generated a great deal of debate and some criticism before they were implemented yet it was a fourth change introduced

without such fanfare that generated the most disruption and controversy. The analysis showed how some planned changes were more disruptive than others, namely the change to conferral groups which transformed a hitherto simple, repetitive process into a complex and variable one. The effects generated by this change included visible mistakes being made during ceremonies in December 2013 that threatened to undermine the artifice of the ritual, something noted by Myerhoff (1984). The change to conferral groups undermined the morale and good will of maintenance workers and created extra work for preparation and maintenance workers. Organisers have since sought to minimize the disruptions wrought by this change but the net result of additional complexity and variability in the ceremonial process is to increase the vulnerability of ceremonies to break down as well as make the smooth running of them more difficult to perpetuate.

## **Chapter 8    Conclusions**

### **8.0.    Purpose of Research**

Given that degree ceremonies enjoy such prominence in higher education and have such a remarkable record of survival, it is surprising that so little is known about them. They appear to have been largely taken for granted in educational research. A recent suggestion that degree ceremonies are ‘remorselessly expanding’ in relation to the global expansion of higher education does not provide empirical evidence that can support, describe or account for this (Thrift, Tickell, Woolgar, Rupp, 2014).

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to shed more light on how degree ceremonies are constructed and perpetuated over time, but most particularly at a time of considerable global growth in the sector.

Global growth in higher education is occurring in different ways, for example, through student enrolments, mobility, institutional partnerships, and overseas campuses. This study draws attention to how four institutions in the UK are responding to these forces of change through degree ceremonies. Furthermore, it asks what motivates higher education institutions to continue conducting degree ceremonies, despite having to constantly re-evaluate and accommodate additional challenges and costs associated with delivering them.

At the forefront of delivering flawless celebratory occasions in these conditions are those responsible for the preparation, maintenance and performance of degree ceremonies. The work undertaken by these actors has been largely overlooked in previous studies but is considered here. In particular, this study looks at how such work contributes to the construction of meaning and other effects produced at degree ceremonies, and what happens when changes are introduced. However, whilst these

human actors are vital, material actants involved in the performance of ceremonies have tended to be relegated to a supportive or subordinate role in earlier studies. This is despite their importance having been previously noted (Magolda, 2003). In view of the limited attention that material actants have received in the past, this study has sought to specifically explore the contribution of ceremonial mace and the academical dress worn by senior officers in the construction of meaning and perpetuation of degree ceremonies. In doing so, this research developed a framework of inquiry that sought to emphasise the construction of meaning and perpetuation of ceremonies through social-material relations.

### **8.1. Response to Research Questions**

In view of the arguments outlined above and the gaps identified in the literature, this research was guided by two research questions. The principal research question asked how degree ceremonies are perpetuated over time, and was concerned with finding out how these occasions generate the effect of continuity, what is being preserved as they do so, and what changes occur along the way.

Taking into account the global expansion occurring in higher education at the time of this study and the fact that growth has previously impacted on degree ceremonies (Wilson, 1952), a second sub-question asked how degree ceremonies are perpetuated in relation to different conditions of growth in higher education. This was designed to address the question of how institutions are responding in a contemporary context.

What follows is a summary response to these questions based on the findings in this study.

## **8.2. How are degree ceremonies perpetuated over time?**

This study identified a combination of factors that are involved in the perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time, these include: material actants and their associations, repetitive and consistent preparation, maintenance and performance work, and capacity for change. Each is addressed specifically in turn.

### **8.2.1. How material actants contributed to the perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time**

Material actants have been shown in this study to play a significant contributory role in the generation of particular effects and the perpetuation of degree ceremonies over time. Ceremonial mace and the academical dress worn by senior officers were the material actants in focus and were found to generate institutional authority, reinforce hierarchies, and reflect different emphasis in organisational priorities and structure. These effects were further intensified when they were placed and ordered in particular ways in relation to other actants.

Previous contemporary accounts about degree ceremonies have alluded to the importance of material actants, but have not closely examined them or addressed how they contribute to the performance and impact of degree ceremonies. The framework of inquiry employed for this study provided the opportunity to demonstrate, in particular, how material actants were able to achieve the effects they did.

By looking at descriptions of early inception ceremonies, it was possible to identify historical associations in relation to ceremonial mace and academical dress which produced the effect of continuity over time and helped stabilise ceremonies in the process. These effects were more powerful at ancient universities where medieval artefacts such as mace are still used for ceremonial purposes. The ceremonial maces included in this study could not claim the same provenance, and were imitations of

these earlier artefacts. However, they were associated with the perpetuation of an institution's authority to award degrees and, as such, they helped to display and transmit this to participants in association with other actants.

Yet surprisingly often, little was known about material actants with historical associations. For example, at the outset of this study in 2013, one of the institutions in the sample knew little about how it had acquired its ceremonial mace or who the maker was. As part of this study, a file of correspondence, which provided the missing information, was found at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This was then passed to the archives at the institution in question.

Academical dress was found to be more adaptable than mace over time in terms of materials used to make it and in terms of its use and the effects it produced. As a result, it embodied changes that had occurred in the past and helped distinguish institutions from one another, whilst retaining a sense of familiarity.

However, these material actants were not isolated entities, they required placing and ordering in particular ways in relation to other actants by preparation and maintenance workers in order to achieve the effects they did.

#### 8.2.2. The importance of repetition and consistency in preparing, maintaining and performing degree ceremonies

The perpetuation of degree ceremonies relied on repetitive, consistent preparation and maintenance work as well as repeated inclusion of specific actants and other features of ceremonies.

Through the placement and ordering of chairs at Rose University, it was possible to see how a sense of orderliness and hierarchy were established during the staging of the venue. Those tasked with this work had honed their skills and expertise as a result of having repetitively configured seating for ceremonies in the past. The work they

carried out was not driven by the goal of establishing a hierarchy but rather by accommodating the correct number of chairs in a consistent and orderly fashion within the venue.

There was evidence that maintenance work did not stop when the performance of ceremonies began and that it was ongoing. Experienced ceremonial officers were often able to identify potential mistakes and minimise their impact in order to maintain the smooth running of a performance. Less experienced staff were sometimes unable to do the same and, in such instances, mistakes were visible to those in the vicinity.

Observing preparation and maintenance work at degree ceremonies highlighted the importance of repetition and consistency in the delivery of these events. These have been cited previously as important features associated with secular ritual (Moore and Myerhoff, 1977). Repetition and order imply the permanence and legitimacy of ritual occasions although, in practice, these are collective cultural constructs designed to convey messages in an authentic and convincing manner (Ibid). Based on the findings in this study, I would add that repetition also creates an expectation of ceremonies to come in the future. Observations of the preparation, maintenance and performance of ceremonies also revealed the fragility of these events and how vulnerable they were to disruptions and particular changes.

### 8.2.3. How disruptions and changes impact on the perpetuation of degree ceremonies

Disruptions and changes introduced into the assemblage of degree ceremonies contributed to their perpetuation in some instances, but also disrupted perpetuation in others. For example, the introduction of online access to these events has helped to extend their reach and visibility. Whereas Storm Desmond created major challenges

for organisers and preparation and maintenance workers at Rose University in December 2015, and nearly resulted in the cancellation or postponement of post-graduate ceremonies that year.

During the period of this study, a series of planned changes were introduced to ceremonies held at Rose University. Through observations and interviews, it was possible to determine that three out of four planned changes introduced at Rose University during the period of this study did not greatly affect the overall ceremonial process, despite there having been a great deal of criticism before implementation.

A fourth change, however, proved more problematic for organisers and support staff. Changes made to conferral groups resulted in: disruptions during the performance of ceremonies in December 2014, resistance and lowering of morale amongst support staff, the generation of more work for organisers and support staff, and the perpetuation of a more complex and variable ceremonial process which, as a consequence, is more vulnerable to breakdowns.

Adding more complexity and variability to the ceremonial process also appears to be at odds with the emphasis and value of repetition and consistency often associated with secular ritual.

These examples demonstrate how degree ceremonies are not isolated from the environments in which they take place, and that they are constantly being buffeted by various forces of change that require responses from those involved in their organisation and delivery. Degree ceremonies in this study were associated predominantly with the effects of globalisation and the positioning of higher education as a global industry. Increasing mobility of students and institutional growth overseas highlighted the culturally-situated nature of degree ceremonies and illuminated their European heritage. Evidence of marketing activity being enacted

through degree ceremonies resonated with narratives about the commodification of higher education and drew attention to how institutional stratification was enacted and resolved between institutions. Changing associations between degree ceremonies, and the broader social contexts in which they are situated, indicate that these ceremonial rituals are never completely static, and that they continue to respond to changing fashions, demography, and commercial pressures, and to variations in social and political climates. Having to constantly respond and adjust to these conditions demonstrates the dynamic and changeable nature of degree ceremonies and illustrates how the appearance of stability, continuity and order requires a great deal of coordinated work in order to achieve it. The framework of inquiry used in this study provided opportunities to demonstrate this by drawing attention to the complexities of the work that went on behind the scenes at degree ceremonies. It also shed more light on those regularly involved in delivering ceremonies who are often given much less consideration. Yet their work is shown in this study to be vital to the smooth running of degree ceremonies. Adding more ceremonies, promotional elements or additional features to these events changes these events for those regularly involved in the preparation, maintenance and delivery of them.

The complexities that organisers faced were further amplified when having to contend with different conditions of growth in relation to degree ceremonies.

### **8.3. How are degree ceremonies perpetuated in relation to different conditions of growth in higher education?**

The sample in this study provided opportunities to consider the expansion of degree ceremonies through student enrolments and mobility, and the further extension of degree ceremonies through collaborative institutional partnerships.

### 8.3.1. The perpetuation of degree ceremonies in relation to increasing student enrolments and mobility

The impact of increasing student enrolments at institutions in this study was accommodated by increasing the number of ceremonies. This allowed their intimacy to be maintained and reduced the effects of boredom that lengthy ceremonies, such as those described in the USA by Wilson (1952) and Magolda (2003), often induce. However, the institutions in this study did not have to cope with the tens of thousands of students that many universities in the USA have to cater for. Other institutions increased and decreased the number of ceremonies which they held as student enrolments fluctuated over time. The multiplication of ceremonies at single venues or across different venues generated a drive for consistency led by leaders and organisers.

Increasing student mobility led to a more internationally representative student body attending degree ceremonies at some institutions. This was particularly noticeable at Rose University where debates and discussions were had about the appropriateness of maintaining the national anthem in ceremonies there. Amongst those interviewed, there was a majority view that it should remain, although there is no doubt that changes in student mobility have prompted some to question its appropriateness.

### 8.3.2. The perpetuation of degree ceremonies through collaborative institutional partnerships

How degree ceremonies were perpetuated through collaborative institutional partnerships depended on the type of relationship that had been arranged. Through investigation of degree ceremonies in such circumstances, it was possible to see how relations of power and authority were constituted and resolved, and the importance attached to these ceremonies by the institutions concerned.

Institutions which were awarding most degrees in such partnerships appeared to have most influence over how they were assembled and performed. In the case of a dual partnership between Rose University in the UK and Hibiscus University in Malaysia, the latter organised and ran ceremonies with occasional support and advice from Rose University. Rose University's associate colleges in the UK organised and ran their own ceremonies with little input from Rose organisers.

However, there were evident challenges when Rose University established new degree ceremonies through a franchise partnership with Lotus Institute in India. The challenges that Rose organisers in the UK faced illuminated the culturally situated nature of degree ceremonies, and the value of having established roblemakers and experienced preparation and maintenance workers. Of particular interest was how the 'quality' of academical dress was culturally situated, learnt, and interpreted.

Quality assurance has been considered in relation to other aspects of higher education, but there have been few examinations of it in relation to degree ceremonies (Room, 2000, Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman, 2012). Yet there was evidence from interview respondents, in relation to material actants, venues and degree ceremonies more generally, to suggest that the quality of a degree ceremony reflected on the quality of an institution.

The international market in higher education is likely to become more competitive as institutions seek to distinguish themselves in the midst of a much larger and more complex sector. Van Damme (2001) has suggested that in these conditions there will be a tendency to focus on issues of 'quality'.

The drive to establish overseas partnerships by UK institutions has been driven in part by funding reductions and various other constraints. In response, overseas institutions and students are motivated to become associated with the UK's higher education

system because of its strong international reputation. Hodson and Thomas (2010) suggest that, in order for both sets of aspirations to be satisfied, it is vital that the reputation of the quality provision seen to be provided by UK higher education institutions is preserved and enhanced in order for it to be able to compete in an increasingly competitive international environment.

This study found that the pursuit of quality and increasing international competition in higher education have been accompanied by a subsequent increase in marketing activity at degree ceremonies.

#### **8.4. The perpetuation of markets and marketing activity in relation to degree ceremonies**

Evidence was found in this study of new commercial markets opening up alongside degree ceremonies as they were extended in relation to global growth. Further marketing activity was observed and reported at all the ceremonies in this study in relation to the display and promotion of institutional reputation and credentials. In many cases, the venues used for degree ceremonies, together with the social and material actants participating, helped to communicate positive messages about institutions hosting these events, although there were occasions where the messages being conveyed were perhaps not ones that institutions would have liked. For example, the venue used by Hargreaves at the time of this study was tired, and the initial robes made for Lotus Institute in India did not meet the quality standards expected by Rose University.

The sample of institutions included in this study, and the framework of inquiry, provided opportunities to compare how the social and material features of degree ceremonies were entangled in the establishment of new markets and marketing activity.

#### 8.4.1. Emergence of new markets and market conditions for established robemakers

In the absence of established robemakers in India, the opportunity arose for a new local market to emerge. This highlighted challenges that existing UK-based robemakers face as new overseas markets emerge. Local expectations and costs may be significantly different to those in the UK which can prevent UK robemakers from entering these markets. As more higher education institutions open around the world, it is likely that more new entrants will enter the robe making market and thus create more competitive market conditions for existing robemakers. There are indications that some are attempting to block new entrants or make it more difficult for them to copy specific designs of academical dress. However, the evidence in this study points to growth in this market and that competition will be based on reputation, price and quality.

#### 8.4.2. How degree ceremonies are embroiled in the enactment of institutional stratification

Increasing marketing activity observed and reported at degree ceremonies is indicative that institutions are being drawn into the 'reputation race' described by van Vught (2008). Institutions concerns with reputation is evident in subtle changes being made to degree ceremonies and these require qualitative research methods in order to be examined and understood. Through the content of speeches, programme guides and a wide variety of social and material actants, institutions sought to promote a positive image of their institution. How they did this varied, and the sample provided an opportunity to investigate how this occurred by observing Rose University's network of collaborative institutional partnerships, both in the UK and overseas.

Through speeches and programme guides, Rose University promoted favourable messages about its position in various ranking systems. It also emphasised its strategic priority to be an international institution through overseas growth and through the composition of its student and staff body. Furthermore, messages were transmitted about the value of a degree in employability terms, despite evidence in other studies that suggests this argument does not necessarily reflect reality for many students. In their speeches, Rose University's collaborative partners in the UK and overseas drew on the status of their more established partner to develop their own institutional reputation and credentials. Thus, Rose University's reputation and credentials were linked to those of its partners and *vice versa*.

Van Vught (2008) describes how such isomorphic tendencies contribute to what he calls the 'higher education reputation race'. In this race, he argues that higher education institutions are constantly seeking to present and develop the best possible image of themselves, and that they will go to great costs to do so (Ibid).

There were indications that not everyone is comfortable with an increase in marketing activity at degree ceremonies, and that it detracts from the students on these occasions. Yet the evidence points to a mutually beneficial relationship between an institution's reputation and ranking, and the lifelong association that a student has with its *alma mater*, although at degree ceremonies the focus of communication was on the benefits accrued by students rather than by the institutions.

In summary, the signs of increasing marketing activity found in this study insinuate that degree ceremonies are being enrolled in the commodification of higher education, and that traditional ranking systems are not the only means of comparison being employed and enacted in the 'reputation race'.

## **8.5. What are degree ceremonies and why are they important to educational research?**

In Chapter Two, I asked what degree ceremonies are. It therefore seems appropriate to return to this question in the concluding chapter. Furthermore, I would like to suggest why such ceremonies are also important to educational research.

What differentiated graduation ceremonies from presentation ceremonies was the clarity of this distinction in Senate minutes, and the use of performative utterances during ceremonies to confer degrees. Otherwise ceremonies were remarkably similar. Consequently, the ongoing success and expansion of degree ceremonies does not appear to rely on distinctions made between graduation and presentation ceremonies, but rather on the repetitive assemblage of socio-material actants, the associations they bring with them, and the careful preparation, maintenance and choreography of these events. These elements are what enable degree ceremonies to connect with the rich heritage, traditions and authority of higher education's past, and enable them to enact and capture the present, whilst simultaneously signalling that there will be future ceremonies to come. According to Myerhoff (1984) and Manning (2000), it is this capacity to abrogate history and time that distinguishes ritual from other daily experience and practice. Yet what this study demonstrates is that this tenuous balancing act crossing time and space is not inert. It is dynamic and changeable, and requires a great deal of work to maintain. Along the way, features associated with the past heritage and traditions of higher education have been lost or superseded over time, whilst a few still remain. The current terrain of higher education is becoming increasingly complex as demand for higher education increases around the world and different types of institutions enter the sector. One of the main contributions this

study makes to existing knowledge is that it demonstrates how degree ceremonies can provide an alternative window on how these changes are being enacted in practice.

## **8.2. Reflecting on the Implications of this Research**

This section reflects on the implications this research has for theory, research, practice and policy.

### **8.3.1. Implications for theory and research**

The framework of inquiry applied in this study has provided insight into how degree ceremonies at the institutions included in the sample were perpetuated, and how they responded to contemporary global influences in higher education associated with growth and marketisation and how, in doing so, perpetuated them through local enactment.

Material actants are shown to play a significant role throughout, as are the social actors tasked with organising, preparing and maintaining degree ceremonies.

There have been few previous examinations of secular ritual that have drawn on basic theoretical devices used in actor-network theory. This is surprising because rituals are often replete with social and material actants whose associations and interactions generate a variety of verbal and non-verbal meanings. Secular ritual is also often associated with stability and order over time, something previous studies of actor-network theory have explored. However, by extending the framework of inquiry to include the preparation and maintenance work that goes into assembling ceremonies, it was possible to see how the effects of stability and order were achieved and how vulnerable these assemblages were on occasion.

Actor-network theory has received a lot of criticism, yet if this had been a study that did not provide the same analytical privilege to material actants as social ones, the

findings would have been different. For example, I would not have followed the ceremonial mace at Rose University and unearthed the file relating to its origins and maker. Nor would I have noticed, whilst analysing programme guides, that the paper quality altered one year, which led me to establish that it coincided with a financial crisis at the institution in question. Therefore, if I had relied only on interview responses from social actors, I would not have found such anomalies or inconsistencies. Drawing on actor-network theory for this study was a distinct advantage in this respect.

### 8.3.2. Implications for practice

As higher education continues to grow in different ways around the world, those involved in organising, preparing, maintaining and intervening in degree ceremonies have the unenviable task of upholding these ceremonial occasions in increasingly complex conditions. Preserving a sense of ritual, whilst accommodating different types of growth and increasing marketing activity, requires a precarious balancing act. This is particularly challenging for existing institutions seeking to establish new degree ceremonies overseas. In their quest to maintain and enhance their reputation, existing institutions in the UK are seeking to ensure a similar level of consistency and quality at the ceremonies of their overseas partners. How much control they have over these is dependent on the type of partnership that is in place, and what kind of support is available locally. Where local support is not available or existing providers find they cannot compete, new commercial markets can emerge. In this study, there were indications that a new international robe-making market is being established.

### 8.3.3. Implications for policy

The emergence of national and international ranking instruments in recent years feeds the 'reputation race' that van Vught (2008) describes, but this study demonstrates how the staging and performance of degree ceremonies appears to be an important site for displaying and promoting an institution's reputation and credentials. This suggests that other more subtle, qualitative ranking systems are in use that involve material actants as well as social ones.

The findings in this study suggest that more established institutions, with favourable positions in ranking systems and actants that reinforce and intensify effects of institutional authority, benefit most from the reputation race described by van Vught (2008). Associate colleges in the UK and less well-established institutions based overseas drew on the reputation and credibility of their more established partner to develop their own institutional image. Thus, institutional stratification was enacted and reinforced in relation to the reputation race described by van Vught (2008). At the moment, the wealthiest, most established institutions held in highest esteem appear to have a competitive advantage over new entrants. As higher education continues to grow on a global scale, this has the potential to translate into a globally stratified system based on such inequalities.

Taking part in the reputation race is a costly affair and, as policy makers continue to withdraw funding and resources from higher education institutions in the UK, they may well be putting them at a severe disadvantage when competing against institutions that have access to more support.

#### 8.3.4. Methodological lessons learnt

Latour (2005) has described actor-network theory as ‘slowciology’ and it was only after the time it took to follow actants, code and analyse data that I came to fully understand his meaning. Actor-network theory is not a very time effective method to use, however the application of this approach does produce a rich data set and opportunities to look in depth at a given field under study.

It is not without its challenges too, actor-network theorists would argue that everyone and everything should be treated symmetrically in the field, and one should not make assumptions about power or any of its effects before entering it (Law, 1992).

However, it would be naïve to dismiss the hierarchical conceptualisations of education inherent in the literature and practices of higher education, and ignore their potential to generate power and activity through the degree ceremonies in this study. Actor-network theory does not recognise these differences *a priori* but instead looks for them through fieldwork and allows for material actants to be involved as well as social ones. Yet there were evident differences to the way I worked in the field based on relations of power. For example, senior officers were not invited to the department to be interviewed but instead I interviewed them in their offices where the surroundings reflected and reinforced their positions in the institution’s hierarchy.

However, gaining access to and interviewing people was a process I had been through before, but gaining access to material artefacts and investigating them was a new experience for me as a researcher.

Again, drawing on the idea in actor-network theory that all actors should be treated the same (Latour, 2005), I decided to consider the material and the spatial conditions and processes for investigating material objects, much as I did for the interview

respondents. For example, the process of gaining access to the ceremonial mace was easier and less time-consuming than arranging interviews with participants. Unlike the interviews with participants that took place in closed offices, my investigation of the mace took place in an open office area where people could walk past. As a result, people passing could join in and make comments which were in themselves revealing. The attention that the mace generated reinforced a view shared in actor-network theory that material objects can exert influence through socio-material relations, and that different interpretations and meanings are able to be constructed in relation to material objects.

#### 8.3.5. Robustness of Truth Claims

Critics of actor network theory have argued that the relativistic and reflexive nature of this approach results in studies that are difficult to reproduce and to generalise from, and that therefore they are of limited value (Collins and Yearley, 1992, Amsterdamska, 1990). However, I believe these criticisms miss opportunities that can be gained through using this approach. For example, it would be difficult to reproduce or to generalise from the unanticipated disruptions caused by Storm Desmond at Rose University in 2015, or the specific challenges that organisers faced when establishing degree ceremonies for the first time at Lotus Institute in India. Yet these non-replicable incidents revealed the dynamic nature and heterogeneity of degree ceremonies, and their fragility. Furthermore, if this had been a study that did not require material objects to be given the same analytical priority as social actors, then I would not have found that respondents' accounts regarding material objects did not always tally. For example, at the primary research site, a framed document positioned on stage under the mace at each degree ceremony was commonly called 'The Charter', yet further investigation revealed that it was, in fact, a photocopy of the

award of arms to the university, and not the original Royal Charter which incorporated the university. Consequently, if I had relied only on interview accounts of degree ceremonies, I would not have found such anomalies or inconsistencies. In this way, using actor-network theory helped to reveal a multiplicity of interpretations and meanings, and demonstrated how they were constructed, reproduced and shared, or not, over time. This did not diminish the importance of the responses I received from the organisers and those closely involved in the ceremonies. It also alerted me to the social locations of these respondents and the potential variance, changeability and temporality of their responses. However, despite the advantages that actor-network theory afforded, in order to attain some analytical purchase, networks had to be cut (Strathern, 1996). In this case, for example, many other actants involved in degree ceremonies were not included. Technological actants, reception areas, ticketing, and buildings were not included, nor was there a strong focus on students, their supporters or academics. Sadly, neither did this study capture data directly from respondents working at Lotus Institute or Hibiscus University. Therefore, this study represents a partial view of degree ceremonies and a view that stems from a western cultural mindset. An examination of different actors with different social locations, cultural mindsets, political affiliations, and backgrounds would likely shed both similar and contrasting lights on degree ceremonies (Mol, 2002). However, despite these clear delimitations, this study does provide rare insight into how degree ceremonies were organised and delivered during a specific period of global growth at four higher education institutions in the UK, one of which had collaborative institutional partnerships with two overseas institutions. It also provides a depth of detail about two material actants and the organisation and the performance of such events that has been less evident in previous studies.

## **8.5. Thoughts about Future Research**

Despite the ongoing popularity and mutual benefits that institutions and students gain from degree ceremonies, it was troubling to find that academic attendance rates were in decline at more than one institution in this study. Without further evidence, it is difficult to explain what has caused this in recent years. Findings presented here suggest it cannot be wholly attributed to increasing workloads, or to multiple or lengthy ceremonies, because when a member of the royal family or a well-known celebrity was present, attendance rates rose rapidly. Institutions regularly carry out surveys to assess the experience of students at degree ceremonies, but I did not come across any surveys that addressed the experience of academic staff (either those in attendance or not).

With so few contemporary studies about degree ceremonies currently available, there are ample opportunities for other educational researchers to make a contribution to this area of the literature. For example, this study has shown that degree ceremonies provide an alternative window on markets and marketing in higher education.

However, there are currently few studies outside the UK, USA and Europe about how degree ceremonies are being assembled and perpetuated elsewhere in the world, or the impact that new technological innovations, such as virtual degree ceremonies, are having on the assemblage, experience and perpetuation of degree ceremonies.

## **8.6. Personal Reflections**

To research and understand degree ceremonies is to understand something of the remarkable history and survival of universities. Both have endured despite enormous changes occurring in their environments over the past eight hundred years. This study has illuminated the scale and unprecedented nature of changes currently occurring

across higher education and I hope that in these circumstances both universities and degree ceremonies continue to survive and flourish.

On a personal level, I hope that global growth sees the emergence of new degree ceremonies that have their own distinctive identities and associations, whilst still retaining at their heart a ritual which enables students to mark a rite of passage that not only celebrates their achievements but also symbolically welcomes them into the academic community.

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## **Appendix One**

### **Institutions included in the Sample**

#### Rose University

Founded in 1964, Rose University held its first degree ceremonies on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1965, when one year Masters Degrees were conferred on eleven male students. In July 2015, 2,289 students were awarded first degrees, and in December the same year 792 students had higher degrees conferred on them at Rose University ceremonies.

These figures highlight how much the university has grown since its foundation.

During the period of this study 7,119 students received first degrees at degree ceremonies, and 2,411 were awarded postgraduate qualifications. During the same period 1,025 students awarded with first degrees graduated in absentia, and 2,795 higher degrees were awarded in absentia. According to the organiser at Rose figures have tended to remain relatively stable, and students awarded with higher degrees often did not attend ceremonies because they were either working or living overseas.

Since its foundation, Rose University has provided degree ceremonies for undergraduates in July, and for postgraduates in December. Until 1969 degree ceremonies were held in Ashton Hall, in the Town Hall in Rose City. Since 1970, they have been held in The Great Hall on the university campus located to south of the city.

At Rose University students are given permission to graduate at the next appropriate graduation ceremony by Senate, or they can graduate in absentia. As a Collegiate University, Rose's undergraduate students graduate at ceremonies by College, whilst postgraduate students graduate by degree.

More time was spent at Rose University than at the other institutions in the sample, observing ceremonies and back room preparations and processes. As a result more data were collected at Rose than at each of the other sites, and this must be taken into account by the reader.

### Rock College and Hargreaves College

Rock College and Hargreaves College have been traditionally associated with vocational routes in education, widening participation, and employability. As associate Colleges of Rose University, both have existing institutional connections with Rose. During the period of this study Rose University was the predominant partner in terms of the number of degrees it validated and awarded at both Colleges. In this capacity Rose University was responsible for maintaining the academic standards of awards and assuring the quality of students' learning opportunities and experiences. As a result, the reputation and authority of Rose University was bound up with the credentials (programmes and results) produced at Rock College and Hargreaves College.

The connection between Rose University and the two Colleges extended to the degree ceremonies that both Colleges ran. During the period that data were collected for this study, senior officers from Rose University attended ceremonies at both Colleges in order to confer degrees validated by Rose University. By including them in the secondary sample for this study I was able to follow social and material actants from Rose University to these ceremonies and observe the interactions and results that ensued. Further background information about these two colleges can be found below.

## Rock College

Rock College can trace its starting point back to 1892 and a school for fisherman that was located on the North West coast in England. Its nautical heritage is still evident in the courses that it runs and qualifications that it awards. In 1987 the nautical college merged with another local College to become Rock College. It currently has four campuses located along the North West coastline and is one of England's largest Further and Higher Education providers. It has approximately sixteen thousand students of which approximately two thousand five hundred are on higher education courses.

During the period of this study degree ceremonies for Rock College took place at a large venue used to host ballroom dancing, exhibitions, conferences, variety shows and degree ceremonies. The degree ceremonies took place there in July each year. They were much larger ceremonies than those run by Hargreaves College.

## Hargreaves College

Hargreaves College was originally founded by public subscription in 1888 as Hargreaves Technical College. It originally specialised in textiles and engineering courses which were especially useful given the industries that were prevalent in the area at that time. It ventured into higher education in 1993, and in April 1995 received associate College status from Rose University. Formally known as the East Rose Institute of Higher Education, the higher education part of Hargreaves College is now called the University Centre. Hargreaves College is located in an area that has seen its strong industrial base gradually decline.

During the period of this study degree ceremonies took place in October each year at King George's Hall in Hargreaves, and in 2014.

## Colossus University

Colossus University is a public distance learning university founded in 1969, and was linked to emerging technology at the time by utilising television and radio to broadcast its courses. The university is associated with widening participation, social mobility and the development of economic capability in higher education through the use of distance learning and utilisation of different technologies to support that endeavour.

In 2013, Colossus University provided degree ceremonies throughout the year at thirteen different locations, twelve in the UK, and one in France. Venues varied from purpose built concert halls to ancient cathedrals, and students were free to choose between them.

Colossus University ceremonies were presentation ceremonies. Students attending had already graduated, and were being presented to members of the Senate and Academic Board for the first time wearing academic attire commensurate with the academic award they had been granted by the university.

### Subsidiary Institutions: Hibiscus University and Lotus Institute

Background information about the two subsidiary institutions, is included to provide the reader with some background information. Both institutions feature in the analysis of data presented in Part II of the thesis. A further argument for including this information is because as Chapters Two and Three established earlier, there is scant information available about international ceremonies outside the USA, and the practical workings of overseas collaborative partnerships in higher education.

Therefore with caveats in place they are included here.

Hibiscus University is a private university in Malaysia which initially began as Hibiscus College in 1987. In 2004, it was granted University College status by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, and in 2006 it entered into an academic partnership arrangement with Rose University. In 2011 Hibiscus achieved university status. The student body is made up of mainly Chinese Malaysian students.

During the period of this study ceremonies in Malaysia took place in October each year at the Hibiscus Resort Hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

The Lotus Institute is a private higher education institution on the outskirts of New Delhi, in India. It is part of a wider Group established in 1982 with various interests in Real Estate, Travel, Tourism and Exports. In 1994 the Group set up its first school and has since gone on to open many more. Further expansion into education led to the establishment of Lotus Education City which is spread across sixty acres of land on the same site as the Lotus Institute. On this site a range of education is offered, from nursery level to higher education level. In 2009, Lotus Institute was established and in the same year became a franchise partner of Rose University.

At the time of this study Lotus Institute degree ceremonies were held at a hotel called The Grand New Delhi, in February each year.

## Appendix Two

### Managing, Coding and Analysing Data

At the end of this study I was left with a large and varied data set. Atlas-ti was used in order to manage and organise such a large and complex set of data.

Out of the twenty seven interviews conducted, I transcribed twenty of them myself and paid for six to be transcribed. I read through the six transcripts returned to me and corrected minor mistakes before loading them with the others onto Atlas-ti. One interview was not fully transcribed which was the interview with the respondent from the Children's University who I met through the Hargreaves College ceremony. The content of this interview was situated in the context of primary school education and less so on degree ceremonies or higher education so instead I listened to the interview and made notes.

Labelling photographs was a lengthy task. I set up a labelling system which helped when I eventually loaded them on to Atlas-ti. For example, I used an abbreviation for the type of data (e.g. Image, Obstv) followed by the institution, followed by a brief description and then the date. The time each photograph was taken was also saved with each photograph enabling me to pinpoint which ceremony it was taken at.

Not all documents that had been photographed were loaded onto Atlas-ti only those that I eventually chose to use. There were over 2500 photographs taken during this study so it would have taken too long to load them all onto Atlas-ti, but they were readily available on my computer and I looked through them regularly as I worked through the analysis. A filing system was also set up to hold documents, leaflets, magazines, and journals that I had collected. I had specific files for Robemakers, The Burgon Society, The Guild of Macebearers, The College of Arms, programme guides,

documentation related to the preparation and organisation of degree ceremonies at the primary research site, additional sources (including materials from the Universities of Bologna, St. Andrews and Oxford). Online filing systems were set up to capture emails related to this study which allowed me to go back and check details during the analysis and writing up phases.

Transcribing twenty interviews took two months. Loading and coding the data took over four months. I had not used Atlas-ti before embarking on this study and made the mistake of not loading data onto the programme during the data collection phase, which left me with a great deal of work to do once I had exited the field. In total the transcription, coding and loading of data took a little over 7 months. Only a fraction of what was loaded and coded eventually made it into the thesis but the data base that was established provides opportunities for further interrogation of the data in future.

Having different sources of data to work with provided opportunities to look at which features of ceremonies interview respondents alluded to and which they didn't. For example,

Today I am coding the third short interview about the Indian ceremonies. So far the elastic under the hats hasn't been mentioned by respondents ... but it is noticeably different to UK ceremonies when watched online. Coding Diary,  
Atlas-Ti, 14.1.15, 10.48am

This was how the coding proceeded over time and how coding notes and analysis notes made it into my online diaries on Atlas-ti.

### **Analysis of Data**

Categories of analysis were established after actors had made connections in the field. However, in order to manage and organise data in a way that enabled me to do this I set up codes for each actor and for particular moments in the preparation and

performance of the ceremonies. This provided the opportunity to follow actors and their interactions at different points in the preparation and performance of ceremonies.

I began with the data from the primary research site and then added data collected from the secondary research sites setting up codes to capture data according to institution as well. I also set up what I termed 'safety net' codes which captured for example connections between institutions, or for particular forces of change mentioned such as marketisation, internationalisation in higher education. I also set up two codes for methodological fits and misfits. The methodological 'misfits' code allowed me to code data that didn't seem to conform in some way with the inquiry framework being used or the research design established at the outset, which also enabled me to go back to see if these queries had been resolved later.

Throughout this process I kept a diary on Atlas-ti recording choices and reasons for setting up codes or merging others. For example,

I have just coded a photograph of the Colossus stage and have found that I needed some additional codes to show senior officers hierarchical assemblage on stage and how the staging reflects power and status in terms of where people and things are situated. Coding Diary, Atlas-Ti, 13.1.15, 10.50am

I think I need to be more discerning about coding today. I have been 'over-coding' I think to try and capture the richness of the data from different angles, one code does not fit all, especially when adopting an approach that wants to demonstrate mess and complexity. Coding Diary, Atlas-Ti, 15/01/2015 09:01:06

Just added ceremonial spaces as a code to capture the limitations of the Hall space and what can and can't be done or organised as a result of space. This is different to the code ceremonial places which refers much more to the buildings and venues themselves. Coding Diary, Atlas-Ti, 15/01/2015 09:01:06

There were codes set up that did not bear much fruit or seem to work well, for example, the 'id' codes which were meant to capture data relating to actors or interactions that generated identity in some way. I found that the more specific the code the more useful it turned out to be. Therefore the resulting list of codes had its advantages and disadvantages (see Appendix Three). However, once data were coded and loaded onto Atlas-Ti the process of analysing data became much easier. It provided the opportunity to look at each actor network, and look at how each was translated and defined through interactions with other actor-networks. For the purpose of this study data were also coded in relation to the preparation processes and performance of ceremonies. This meant that data could be searched according to different points in the ceremonies where connections were happening, as well as by according to which actants were involved.

Actor-network theory was not a quick approach to use. A three stage process of analysis took place which is described in Chapter 4. Over time I built up a large body of thick descriptions which I revisited often.

After seven months I reflected on what the main themes were in the data and decided that what appeared most interesting was how degree ceremonies extended across institutions but still managed to generate the effect that they were stabilised, fixed and unchanging, whilst being adaptable in other respects. I was also interested in how forces of change were reflected and enacted through the ceremonies. This led me to finally rest on the two main research questions and two auxiliary questions articulated in Chapter 1 and which guided this thesis. Arriving at research questions after the collection of data is not unusual in studies informed by actor-network theory or ethnography for that matter. What is found in the field drives the questions in many respects.

## Appendix Three

### Coding List

Code-Filter: All

---

HU: Degree ceremonies 20.6.15  
File: [C:\Users\swear\_000\Documents\Scientific  
Software\ATLAsTi\TextBank\Degree ceremonies 20.6.15.hpr7]  
Edited by: Super  
Date/Time: 2017-07-19 10:26:54

---

#Academicsals  
acad.dress\_RO\_change  
acad.dress\_RO\_materiality\_effects  
Academicsals\_bedel\_macebearer  
Academicsals\_Chancellorsrobes\_CB  
Academicsals\_Chancellorsrobes\_HRH  
Academicsals\_change\_incidental  
Academicsals\_conventions  
Academicsals\_cultural\_effects  
Academicsals\_epaulets  
Academicsals\_epitoge  
Academicsals\_fur  
Academicsals\_gender  
Academicsals\_Lotus  
Academicsals\_gold\_lace\_frogging  
Academicsals\_halberdiers  
Academicsals\_hats  
Academicsals\_hats\_history  
Academicsals\_hats\_RO\_ChancellorCB  
Academicsals\_hats\_RO\_ProChancellor  
Academicsals\_hats\_Marshals\_RO  
Academicsals\_hats\_narroware  
Academicsals\_hats\_Unibo  
Academicsals\_history\_hoods  
Academicsals\_hoods  
Academicsals\_knowledge  
Academicsals\_labels  
Academicsals\_laurel.wreath.headress  
Academicsals\_RO  
Academicsals\_materials\_availability\_inconsitencies  
Academicsals\_narroware  
Academicsals\_Colossus  
Academicsals\_power  
Academicsals\_robe\_recycling  
Academicsals\_robles\_ceremonialofficers  
Academicsals\_robles\_seniorofficers  
Academicsals\_robles\_student  
Academicsals\_seniorofficers\_RO\_red  
Academicsals\_seniorofficers\_RO\_VC  
Academicsals\_seniorofficers\_warw  
Academicsals\_status

Academics\_strings  
Academics\_Hibiscus  
Academics\_train  
Academics\_Unibo\_sashes\_status  
Agency\_combinations  
Agency\_human  
Agency\_non-human  
Alumni  
Atmosphere  
Awards\_honorarydegrees  
Awards\_RO\_AlexandraMedal  
Awards\_RO\_alumni  
Awards\_RO\_staff  
Awards\_students  
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Ceremonial\_bowing  
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ceremonial\_change\_impactof  
Ceremonial\_change\_incremental  
Ceremonial\_change\_radical  
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Ceremonial\_co-ordination  
Ceremonial\_costs  
Ceremonial\_cultural\_language\_differences  
Ceremonial\_differences\_beyondRONetwork  
ceremonial\_differences\_RO\_network  
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Ceremonial\_familiarity  
Ceremonial\_finance  
Ceremonial\_formality  
Ceremonial\_impact  
Ceremonial\_incidental\_change  
Ceremonial\_informality  
Ceremonial\_intentional\_change  
ceremonial\_knowledge  
ceremonial\_leadership\_and\_management  
Ceremonial\_movement  
Ceremonial\_namecards  
Ceremonial\_outofordinary  
ceremonial\_performance  
ceremonial\_politics  
Ceremonial\_power  
Ceremonial\_precision  
ceremonial\_procedures  
Ceremonial\_process  
ceremonial\_processions  
Ceremonial\_provision\_disabled  
Ceremonial\_provision\_posthumous  
Ceremonial\_purpose  
Ceremonial\_rehearsal  
Ceremonial\_repetition  
ceremonial\_rhythm  
ceremonial\_ritual  
Ceremonial\_scripts  
ceremonial\_service  
ceremonial\_skill  
ceremonial\_spaces

ceremonial\_speeches  
ceremonial\_tacit  
ceremonial\_timing  
Ceremonial\_tradition  
Ceremonial\_transformation  
ceremonial\_venues  
ceremonial\_visibility  
ceremonial\_wrong  
ceremonies\_databases  
Ceremonies\_drinking  
ceremonies\_eating  
ceremonies\_emotion  
ceremonies\_events\_RO  
ceremonies\_gender  
Ceremonies\_shaking\_hands  
Ceremonies\_StMartins  
Ceremony\_applause  
ceremony\_attendance\_children\_RO  
ceremony\_attendance\_rates  
ceremony\_attendance\_rates\_academics  
ceremony\_boring  
ceremony\_collaboration\_co-operation  
ceremony\_family\_supporters  
Ceremony\_HE\_differences  
Ceremony\_HE\_similarities  
ceremony\_installation\_RO  
ceremony\_lengthof  
Ceremony\_lining\_up\_academics  
ceremony\_lining\_up\_students  
Ceremony\_RO\_benefits\_student  
Ceremony\_RO\_change\_introductionofapplause\_2013  
Ceremony\_RO\_change\_introductionofapplause\_VC\_current\_power  
Ceremony\_RO\_change\_to\_middleofceremony  
ceremony\_RO\_conferment  
Ceremony\_RO\_nationalanthem  
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Ceremony\_Col\_whenisdegreeawarded?  
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Ceremony\_size  
Ceremony\_whatmakesitspecial?  
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ChancellorsChair\_Rose  
Charter  
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Colour\_blue  
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Colour\_gold  
Colour\_green  
Colour\_grey  
Colour\_purple  
Colour\_red  
Colour\_silver  
Colour\_violet  
Colour\_white  
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critique\_methodological

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culture\_HE\_Rose  
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culture\_westernexamples  
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Document\_handpainted\_Unibo  
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Document\_RO\_seating\_plans  
Document\_oration  
Document\_scrolls\_scroll\_holders  
Document\_Unibo\_honorarycertificate  
Documents\_ceremony\_contracts  
Documents\_degree\_certificates\_RO  
Documents\_paper\_letters  
Documents\_programme\_guides  
Documents\_promotional\_materials  
Documents\_prospectus  
Documents\_signage  
Documents\_Unibo\_magna.carta  
Documents\_Unibo\_studentdocspre1088  
Dress\_clothing  
Dress\_clothing\_gloves  
Dress\_gender  
Dress\_hats  
Dress\_shoes  
Elitism  
Expectation  
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Graduating\_students\_PG\_Unibo  
Graduating\_students\_UG  
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HE\_authority  
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HE\_fees  
HE\_history  
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HE\_independence  
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HE\_Italy

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HE\_values\_purposes  
HE\_wideningparticipation  
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id\_royalty  
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id\_Unibo  
id\_uniformity  
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Material\_gold  
Material\_halberds\_RO  
Material\_leather

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Material\_mace\_Hibiscus  
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Material\_velvet  
Material\_wood  
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Materiality\_mace  
Materiality\_silver  
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media\_facebook  
media\_mobilephones  
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media\_onlinestreaming\_lecturetheatre  
media\_photography  
media\_photography\_Colossus  
media\_screens  
media\_television  
media\_twitter  
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media\_virtual\_ceremony  
Memories\_first\_degreceremony  
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multiple\_viewpoints\_RO\_ceremonies\_traditional  
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Music\_ceremonial  
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Music\_Lotus  
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netdur\_nationalanthem  
netdur\_olduniversities\_RO  
netdur\_royalty  
netdur\_Unibo  
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network.assemblage\_SouthAfrica  
network.assemblage\_HE  
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network.assemblage\_Rose  
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network.assemblage\_RO\_beginning  
network.assemblage\_RO\_Rock  
network.assemblage\_RO\_PKRose  
network.assemblage\_RO\_end  
network.assemblage\_RO\_Lotus  
network.assemblage\_RO\_just\_after\_ceremony  
network.assemblage\_RO\_lunches  
network.assemblage\_RO\_middle  
network.assemblage\_Col  
network.assemblage\_Col\_arrivalatceremony  
network.assemblage\_Col\_before  
network.assemblage\_Col\_beginning  
network.assemblage\_Col\_endofceremony  
network.assemblage\_Col\_Singapore  
network.assemblage\_Hibiscus  
network.assemblage\_Unibo  
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network\_learning  
network\_power  
network\_reciprocity  
network\_resistance  
network\_workingtomaintain  
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networkkassemblage\_RO\_beginnings  
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networkconnections\_familysupporters  
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networkconnections\_HE\_RO\_Governance\_GOVTinquiry\_postNolan  
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networkconnections\_Latin  
networkconnections\_law  
networkconnections\_linkswithotherinstitutions  
networkconnections\_RO  
networkconnections\_RO\_army  
networkconnections\_RO\_externalacademicinstitutions  
networkconnections\_RO\_localcommunity  
networkconnections\_RO\_royalty  
networkconnections\_museums  
networkconnections\_olduniversities  
networkconnections\_Oxford  
networkconnections\_police

networkconnections\_robemakers  
networkconnections\_robemakers\_wippells\_church  
networkconnections\_St.Andrews  
networkconnections\_Hibiscus  
networkconnections\_Unibo  
networkconnections\_UniversityCapeTown  
networkconnections\_warwick  
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noise\_sounds  
non\_canonical\_practices  
Othering  
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People\_Axis  
People\_ceremonial\_RO\_halberdiers  
People\_ceremonial\_RO\_Macebearer  
People\_ceremonial\_RO\_Marshals  
People\_ceremonial\_RO\_orator  
People\_ceremonial\_RO\_presenter  
People\_ceremonial\_macebearers  
People\_ceremonial\_master\_of\_ceremonies  
People\_ceremonial\_Col\_Marshals  
People\_ceremonial\_Col\_Presenter  
People\_ceremonial\_presenters  
People\_ceremony\_organisers\_supportstaff\_inter\_HE  
People\_Hist/1  
People\_interviewee\_Unibo  
People\_RO\_ceremonialsupportstaff  
People\_RO\_MoC  
People\_Col\_Axis1\_f  
People\_Pre\_Axis\_RO  
People\_presenters  
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pow\_material\_RO\_hats\_women  
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pow\_olduniversities\_degreceremonies  
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Power\_consensual  
Presiding\_Officers  
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researcher\_comments  
Respondents\_RO\_lengthofservice  
Rituals\_durability  
Rituals\_identity  
Rituals\_ritesofpassage  
Rituals\_Universality  
Robemakers  
Robemakers\_Edes  
Robemakers\_Wippells  
Robing\_room\_Col  
Senate  
SeniorOfficers\_Chancellor\_RO  
SeniorOfficers\_Chancellors  
SeniorOfficers\_Lotus  
SeniorOfficers\_Governance  
SeniorOfficers\_HE\_VCs  
SeniorOfficers\_hierachical\_assemblage\_RO

SeniorOfficers\_RO\_CAO  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_Chancellor\_CB  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_Chancellor\_HRH  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_durationofoffice  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_DVC  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_governance\_Institutional\_power  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_PVC  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_PVC1  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_PVC2  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_UniversitySecretary\_1  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_VC\_CharlesCarter  
 SeniorOfficers\_RO\_VC\_current  
 SeniorOfficers\_presidingofficer  
 SeniorOfficers\_ProChancellor  
 SeniorOfficers\_Unibo\_Rector  
 SeniorOfficers\_VC\_RO  
 SeniorOfficers\_VC\_Col  
 SeniorOfficers\_Visitor  
 sensorial  
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 socio-material-combinations  
 socio-material-spatial-sensorial\_assemblages  
 socio-material\_identity\_assemblage  
 socio-material\_power\_assemblage  
 socio-sensorial-material\_combinations\_RO  
 socio-sensorial\_combinations  
 socio-spatial\_assemblages  
 socio\_assemblages  
 socio\_identity\_assemblages  
 socio\_power\_assemblage  
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 Stage\_steps  
 Staging  
 Staging\_CapeTown  
 staging\_chairs  
 Staging\_flowers  
 Staging\_FROW\_RO  
 Staging\_RO  
 staging\_RO\_GreatHall\_ramp  
 Staging\_power\_status\_Col  
 Staging\_reception\_areas  
 Staging\_seating  
 students\_union\_Col  
 technological\_changes  
 technological\_influence  
 technology\_change\_RO\_photography  
 Technology\_impact  
 Technology\_microphones  
 technology\_organising  
 technology\_practices  
 Temporality\_examplesof  
 trans\_degreceremonies\_RO\_beginning  
 transculturation\_examples  
 transculturation\_power  
 Type of degree  
 University\_culture\_examples

## Appendix Four

### Detailed Breakdown of Data Collected

Where & when data collected	Interviews	Observation Notes, diary, & documents	Photographs	Degree Ceremony Programme Guides	Ceremonies attended			
					Live	Live Online	Virtual	DVD
<b>Primary Research Site (PRS)</b> (April 2013 – Dec 2015)	24	6 Diaries	<b>Ceremonies</b>	6 Programme Guides 2013-2015  Review of the first 50 years of programme guides held in University Archives  1965 – 2015 (completed between April – July 2014 in University Archives)	<b>July 2013</b>	<b>July 2013</b>	<b>July 2013</b>	<b>July 2013</b>
		Observation notes	70 (Jul 2013)		5	2	0	1
		Recorded review of academic dress worn by officers of the university	236 (Dec 2013)		(lecture theatre)			
		Emails forwarded to Marshals	180 (Jul 2014)		3			
		Leaflets & flyers	139 (Dec 2014)		(home computer)			
		Emails sent to interviewees	250 (July 2015)					
			57 (Dec 2015)					
			<b>University's Charter</b>					
			7 (Archives)					
			29 (framed document on stage)					
			<b>Mace</b>					
			29					

Where & when data collected	Interviews	Observation Notes, diary, & documents	Photographs	Degree Ceremony Programme Guides	Ceremonies attended			
					Live	Live Online	Virtual	DVD
Rose University Primary Research (2013-2015)		Emails sent related to gaining access	<b>Halberdiers Weapons</b> 12		<b>Dec 2013</b> 4	<b>Dec 2013</b> 0	<b>Dec 2013</b> 0	<b>Dec 2013</b> 0
			<b>University Officer's Academic Dress</b> 237		<b>July 2014</b> 6	<b>July 2014</b> 3 (2 home computer, 1 lecture theatre)	<b>July 2014</b> 0	<b>July 2014</b> 0
			<b>50 years of Programme Guides</b> 525		<b>Dec 2014</b> 1	<b>Dec 2014</b> 2 (reception area on campus)	<b>Dec 2014</b> 0	<b>Dec 2014</b> 0
			<b>Academic robing room</b>		<b>July 2015</b> 1	<b>July 2015</b> 3 (home computer)	<b>July 2015</b> 0	<b>July 2015</b> 0
			<b>Student robing room</b>		<b>Dec 2015</b> 0	<b>Dec 2015</b> 3 (reception area, County bar)	<b>Dec 2015</b> 0	<b>Dec 2015</b> 0
			<b>Photography Area</b>					

Where & when data collected	Interviews	Observation Notes, diary, & documents	Photographs  Correspondence relating to academic dress	Degree Ceremony Programme Guides	Ceremonies attended			
					Live	Live Online	Virtual	DVD
<b>Hargreaves College</b> Associate College of Rose University (24 Oct 2013)	0	Diary  Observation notes  Leaflets	83	1				
<b>Rock College</b> Associate College of Rose University (10 July 2014)	0	Diary  Observation notes  Leaflets	280	1				
<b>Hibiscus University</b>	0	Observation notes	6	1				<b>October 2013</b>  1

Where & when data collected	Interviews	Observation Notes, diary, & documents	Photographs	Degree Ceremony Programme Guides	Ceremonies attended			
					Live	Live Online	Virtual	DVD
Dual Partnership Arrangement with Rose University (Malaysia)								
<b>Lotus Institute</b> Franchise Partnership with Rose University (India)	0	Observation notes	4	0				<b>7 February 2013</b> 1
<b>Colossus University</b> UK 24 Sep 2013 4 Oct 2013	1	Diary Observation notes Leaflets	97	1	<b>4 Oct 2013</b> 1	<b>4 Oct 2013</b> 1 (at venue)		
<b>VISITS TO THE FOLLOWING UNANTICIPATED SITES</b>								

Where & when data collected	Interviews	Observation Notes, diary, & documents	Photographs	Degree Ceremony Programme Guides	Ceremonies attended			
					Live	Live Online	Virtual	DVD
The University of Edinburgh 29 Nov 2013	0	Observation notes	4	0		29 Nov 2013 1 (home computer)	29 Nov 2013 1 (via Second Life)	
University of Bologna, Italy 6-7 June 2014	Met member of staff & organisers	Diary  Observation notes	282	1	1			
The University of St. Andrews 11 April 2014	Met assistant curator of exhibition & organisers	Diary Observation Notes	98	1				
The University of Oxford (25 Nov 2013)		Observation notes	<b>File UR6/NU/1, file1 held at Bodleian</b> 42	1		1 (YouTube recordings in 2013, 2014)		

Where & when data collected	Interviews	Observation Notes, diary, & documents	Photographs	Degree Ceremony Programme Guides	Ceremonies attended			
					Live	Live Online	Virtual	DVD
			Sheldonian Theatre 63					
J. Wippell & Son Ltd. Robe-makers	0	Observation notes Paper file of correspondence (146 pages)						
The Burgon Society Oct 2013	1	Journals Newsletters						

