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Higher Education in Europe: Europeanisation, Ideas and Functions

Doctoral Dissertation

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Ljubljana, 2015

Ackowledgements

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Abstract

Despite the fact that European states hold formal regulatory competences in higher education, the coordination of reforms increasingly takes place on the international and transnational platforms/processes. A growing number of European level policy and political initiatives (in particular the Bologna Process and EU institutions) are sources of political action, where it is possible to trace the discourses and ideas about the present and future of higher education in Europe. This research project is outlining the ideations of higher education within the European political and policy arena, thereby opening an insight into the Europeanization of higher education from the ideational perspective and eventually shedding light on the meaning attributed to higher education in contemporary Europe.

In terms of analytical approaches, complementing the *Discursive Institutionalism* (a branch of new institutionalism) with the historicist and critical theory represents an innovative blend and thereby a new contribution to the scholarship on Europeanisation of higher education. The analysis is based on a particular set of ideational rules and discursive regularities that emerge in the context of Europeanisation of higher education and follow a particular logic of communication. The institutions are viewed both as *structures* – a context that constrains, or enables, the agents, and as *constructs* that are contingent to agents' thoughts, words and action. The ideational dynamism was contextualised in the change and continuity of the historical structures and thereby the study accounted for the larger picture of the social world and the spirit of the time.

The interpretation of the field data suggests that to a certain extent Europe continues to adhere to roles and purposes attributed to higher education in the liberal humanist spirit of the time and the welfare-state programmatic hegemony. These ideas remain embedded in the historical structure. In the analysed policy arenas they act as guardians against radical and rapid interventions into the higher education sector. However, the historical-structural background has changed over past decades and triggered dynamism in the ideation of higher education. The discursive interaction in European policy arenas clearly indicates the emergence of new and powerful ideations of higher education. Higher education has departed from serving the grand projects of the emancipation of humanity, the idealistic unity of knowledge and empowerment of economically disadvantaged social groups. It is now set on the path to becoming increasingly ideated as a public investment that is supposed to yield to the economic competitiveness and

immediate use of individuals and groups. Moreover, on a more fundamental level, one can discern the silhouette of the idea of higher education as a commodity that is valued in terms of exchange and its income generating potential on the global market of services. The identified ideatios meet, match and clash within the European policy arenas. Accordingly, this research has brought us to the conclusion about the streams of ideating higher education, the relationship between them and interpretation of the overall direction of the institutional change.

Key words: higher education, ideas, institutional context, historical structures, discourse, education policy, university, knowledge, Europeanisation, knowledge economy, transnational education, global market of services, European Union, reform.

List of acronyms

BFUG   Bologna Follow-up Group

BPG   Bologna Preparatory Group

CV   Curriculum Vitae

DG EAC   Directorate General Education, Audio-visual and Culture

DG MARKT   The Internal Market and Services Directorate General

ECJ   European Court of Justice

ESE   European School of Economics

ESIB   The National Unions of Students in Europe (the

ESU   European Students' Union

GATS   General Agreement on Trade in Services

IMF   International Monetary Fund

NTU   Nottingham Trent University

OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

THE   Times Higher Education

UK   United Kingdom

UMP   Union pour un mouvement populaire

WTO   World Trade Organisation

1. Introduction

Ideas have often been matter of enquiry of scholars interested in politics, ever since politics has made up one of the central organisational aspects of civilisation. In Europe, this certainly includes ideas about science, knowledge and education. Historical periods have been marked by both changes and a continuity of ideas on higher education. What about higher education in contemporary Europe?

In the late 1970s, Jean Francois Lyotard conceptualised the tectonic shifts in society and culture and postulated that knowledge essentially constitutes the political and ethical and that changes in the status of knowledge mark a transformation in the nature of society and human experience (Lyotard 1984). Although he focused on knowledge in post-modern times, his report raises a question about the roles, functions and purposes of higher education in the world he described in his anticipatory writings. Since this book was first published in 1979, European higher education has undergone considerable changes. The general idea for this research project germinated in a similar pool of interrogatives, but in a 21st century context. The study departs from the question of how European societies treat higher education in the ongoing 'post-modern' era, given the pertaining historico-structural changes and the political project of the Europeanisation of higher education. Is it possible to conceptualise the ideation of higher education in Europe today in a comparable way?

The nation-state project at some point demonstrated its perils for humanity and world peace. It was only after the cataclysmic epilogue of the race of nations that pan-European institutions returned to the old continent. After two destructive world wars the ideas of peace and cooperation underpinned a new European integration process, born into the ruined and impoverished Europe. Based on functional cooperation and the interdependence of countries on key economic and security issues like coal and steel, atomic energy and trade, part of the European continent joined in an era of peace and prosperity, crumbling walls and fading borders. Today's European integration is composed of a variety of networks, regimes and organisations. It is occurring within and beyond the political boundaries of the EU. The political process consists of ideas and discourses that can be observed in political action and in various coordinative and communicative political/policy fora. They are difficult to pin down and often politically contentious, the subject of polemics in policy debates, yet this does not mean that

they are not there and that they are not relevant for understanding the world (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 2).

Besides the many roles and purposes it has acquired in the decades following World War II, higher education also became a category within transnationalisation, regionalisation and globalisation processes (Zgaga 2007, 15). The university returned as one of the important pan-European institutions, but this time in a completely different institutional context compared to the pre-nation state Europe. Throughout the history of post-World War II European integration, higher education has been present as a field of cross-border cooperation and integration (Corbett 2005). Nevertheless, it only gained momentum in the 1980s with the initiative of the EU Commission and later gradually moved closer to the top of European political agendas. In 1999 this evolution led to the political consecration of European-wide policy coordination in higher education – the Bologna Process. The old norms of the borderless academic world faced a new context of the internationalisation/Europeanisation of higher education, meeting other institutional backgrounds and becoming infused with different ideas (Gornitzka et al. 2007, 210). Like Europe is in a search for a new stable social and economic order, the European university is also in a search for its legitimate position in the transformed order (Olsen 2007).

The inter-governmental Bologna Process has been juxtaposed and intertwined with institutional arrangements that are gradually taking up national functions in several public policy areas, including higher education (Hartman 2008, 81). The shifts in the social and economic context are intensively determining the imaginaries in which the ideation of higher education is taking place (Jessop 2008). Knowledge has increasingly been considered a key ingredient of economic success, thereby bringing higher education and research into the centre of European policies concerned with Europe's performance in global markets (Olsen and Maassen 2007, 7).

This study stays within European boundaries, but is not immune to the global context. It focuses on the position of the university from a pan-European perspective in an attempt to interpret the modern conceptualisation of the once already cohesive institution of Europe as a political entity. What lies at the base of this relatively rapid and substantial shift of a traditionally national policy domain to the European (international and transnational) policy/political arena is the interrogative that inspired this study. In fact, it aspires to unveil the historical situation in which European-level higher education policy processes are taking place. The central concern of the research – *the contemporary ideations of higher education in Europe* – can only be interpreted

considering the political, social and economic dimensions of the larger historical context in which the Europeanisation process is unfolding.

The research project – aims, interrogatives, guiding curiosity

One of the central theoretical premises of this study is the changing nature of institutions, norms, ideas, socio-economic relations and thereby historical structures that constitute our world. Political action is motivated by ideas, but at the same time these are not fixed. Ideas are viewed as something constantly in flux. Once engaged in discourse – namely, as actors communicate and interact with one another – they are further shaped, reconsidered and redefined (Beland & Cox 2011, 5). Similarly fluent is the system of norms and institutions around us. It represents a stable structure, yet it can be subject to change because it is constructed by humans and society. Higher education forms an integral part of this stable and changing institutional setting.

The research endeavour is oriented to interpreting what the emerging European political formation means for higher education and what can be gleaned from the main political and policy processes in the higher education domain about the ideas and nature of higher education in contemporary Europe. Thus, the principal aim of the research project is to identify the ideations of higher education in the European political and policy area, thereby interpreting the Europeanisation of higher education from the ideational perspective. It sets out as an attempt to discern the main ideational streams or ideations of higher education, the relationship between them, their origins and historical context. It then moves on to theorising about the nature, status and dynamics of change in ideating higher education in contemporary Europe.

In the initial phase the approach was inductive. Exploring the main Bologna Process documents and inner dynamics brought me to conceptual categories and conceptualisations that provided leads to further steps in the research process. Even though I did not follow strictly a deductive (hypothesis testing) approach, I did pursue the above outlined aims and pose some general (guiding) research questions:

1. Which ideas appear and how do they relate to each other in the interactive process of discourse in the Bologna Process?

2. What is the larger institutional (structural) context of the discourses and ideas on higher education in the European political arena?

3. What do the identified discourses, ideas and institutional context in the Europeanisation of higher education tell us about the nature and status of higher education in contemporary Europe?

While the first question reflects the starting point of data collection and interpretation (Chapter 4), the second and third questions are more relevant in the phases of enquiry into other European policy forums and discursive venues (Chapters 5-9). In those phases, I explore the development of concepts, ideas and discourses and present some of the actors involved in the process.

What in the dissertation I refer to as *policy arenas*, *venues of policy and political action*, *policy forums,* and *venues of discursive interaction* was crucial for observing the interactive process of discourse, the substantive content of ideas, the logic of communication and the pertaining institutional background. It was therefore essential to find a venue where scripts, policy initiatives and similar platforms where some sort of policy or political activity was taking place, namely where actors engaged in coordinating and deliberating policies, where negotiation, bargaining, persuasion, contesting or even clashes take place, where ideas meet, match or collide. These venues represent the basic source of data for further interpretation and theorising.

Perhaps the most obvious political and policy phenomenon one encounters when addressing the European level of higher education policy activity is the Bologna Process. I consider it as a point of departure in the course of exploring the European higher education landscape – a multi-level and multi-actor political ground where discursive interaction unfolds to coordinate a common denominator on the ideation of higher education. The findings from the Bologna policy arena (Chapter 4) inspired further research and data collection on the way of interpreting the ideations of higher education in Europe.

I also pay considerable research attention to the ideas and discourses in institutions of the EU. I choose this emphasis because of the EU's centrality in the regional integration process and thus its role as a policy venue, lately with considerable influence in the realm of higher education. The findings from the EU political and especially policy arena are crucial for interpreting and understanding conceptual categories and relationships of ideas previously traced in the Bologna Process. By exploring the discourses and underlying ideas in EU institutions I also attempt to gain a theoretical insight into the nexus between the emergence/evolution of the Bologna Process and the EU's ideas on higher education. I thereby try to understand why higher education has become such an important item in the international and transnational political and policy arena.

In order to understand the nature and origin of ideas and interpret the relationships between them, the study takes the broader historical and social context, the actors and their (inter)action into consideration. This sheds light on the conditions and circumstances leading to the ideations of higher education. In other words, knowing the venues where the ideas were created in conjunction with identifying the relations between these ideas and the involved actors enables an interpretation of the connection between the identified ideas and a bigger picture of the social world. This breadth breath of theorising (in Part III) is enabled by complementing two approaches: Discursive institutionalism and the neo-Gramscian critical approach to international relations (both presented in detail in Chapter 2). The latter is used as an extension of the former on the basis of the interlocking elements of both. Thereby a broader historical perspective opens on why some ideas prevail over the others and how dominant ideas, norms and institutions were established or changed.

The chapters are written so that they largely represent self-standing sections of the monograph. In this way it is possible to read them separately and extract partial discoveries of the research project. The shortcoming of such a monograph style is that some elements of the text appear at several points of the monograph, and might thereby disturb a reader who has chosen to read the whole study from beginning to end. However, there are not too many of such instances of repetition.

Researching Europe beyond national boundaries, the contribution to the field of study and limitations of this research project

A number of authors argue that in Europe it is possible to observe a plurality of ideations of higher education, depending on the prevailing institutional background, most commonly associated with the nation-state or sub-region under observation (Gornitzka et al. 2007, Olsen 2007). However, in the present body of literature this multitude of ideations often fails to be contextualised in the larger historical structure and linked to the reconfiguration of social forces and social relations on the regional and global scales. Even though the relevance of the diverse and distinctive national settings cannot be overlooked (especially in the education sector), developments in social and economic relations are shifting ever more intensively to the cross-border level. The traditional distinctness of national economies and societies is being penetrated by the transnational dimension of social forces (Cox 1999, 12). In Europe, it is difficult to cast doubt on the existence of the policy processes and policy arenas that transcend the nation-state and which involve actors other than nation-states (Apeldoorn 2001, 32, 48). The integration

process has reached far and beyond mere economic issues. The levels of policy action (national, regional etc.) should not be viewed as separate but as being in a dialectical relation between multiple scales of activity, constitutive of Europe and the European higher education sector (Robertson 2010c, 34). Europe is thus taken as a distinctive political formation hosting a multitude of separate yet intertwined policy venues or arenas.

Based on this premise, studying regional- and global-level policy processes, the fluctuation of ideas and configuration of social forces is more than justifiable. The question of whether there is such a thing as European in the realm of higher education is left behind. This project focuses on higher education as a central institution in the changing European structural context and takes the existence of a transnational/European dimension of the higher education policy domain as a starting point.

The terms Europeanisation, internationalisation and transnational processes are all used to describe different processes/trends (Altbach and Knight 2007). This study is dedicated to the European policy and political arena; therefore, the term Europeanisation is used when referring to the transnational processes occurring within the limits of the European region and is not the same as internationalisation, which denotes cooperation between states, inter-governmental organisations and regimes. Internationalisation is, however, an important process for European higher education and is therefore also a subject of this study. The trends of transnationalisation and internationalisation, both reaching beyond the boundaries of Europe, are also a determinant of higher education and the related ideas and discourses and therefore taken into account as part of the bigger historical context.

Limiting the data collection and analysis to the regional level does not make my research any less relevant for national environments. Quite the opposite: The discourses and ideas appearing on the European level are a result of the above-mentioned social and economic relations and therefore their power may reach down to the national level in a considerable extent (Lynggaard 2011, Hay and Rosamond 2002). For example, EU integration as a set of concepts and conceptions – including those on higher education – makes up a discursive context for domestic actors who must articulate themselves through such discourses (Lynggaard 2011, 4). It often appears as an external economic or social constraint – an inexorable process of economic change, frequently linked to the narrative of globalisation, which necessitates certain domestic reforms (Hay and Rosamond 2002, 153). European policy ideas can also represent a platform for learning and policy transfer (Radaelli and Schmidt 2004, 372), especially in the pro-

European integration and relatively uncontentious national settings (Hay and Rosamond 2002, 163). It is not uncommon for political elites to make conscious and reflexive strategic use of these discourses to justify domestic reforms (Hay and Rosamond 2002, 161; Lynggaard 2011, 4; Radaelli and Schmidt 2004, 372).

It is thus difficult to cast doubt on the high relevance of studying European-level policy arenas of higher education, even though today European states preserve their formal regulatory competencies in higher education. This is even more the case if looked at from a critical perspective in an attempt to construct a bigger, global picture of the processes and backgrounds. The impetus for change might not always arise from local social and economic relations but can instead appear as a result of international developments which transmit their ideational currents to the 'periphery'. Some mechanisms through which these ideational currents can be transmitted are international organisations, regimes and governing structures (Cox 2005, 44).

In an effort to contextualise the policy and political processes and identify the ideologies and power, I leave out an interpretation of the competing and multi-layer sets of discourses and practices that construct the 'region of Europe'. Thus, I do not dwell on the conceptualisation of Europe and do not immerge into an analysis of the social construction of the region as such. The results of this study are nevertheless expected to feed into the scholarship on the social construction, imagining and ideating of Europe, especially because ideations of higher education and university are closely interwoven with the imagining Europe and its institutional tissue.

Besides contributing in terms of viewing the ideations of higher education in the regional context, this study adds to the range of analytical approaches for addressing the research field of higher education. With the construction of a hybrid approach, the research project aims beyond the mere problem-oriented study of policies, politics, interests and institutions, and thus takes account of a critical and larger picture in which the continuity and change are taking place. Thus I do not take into consideration the micro-level practice and reform dynamics in each of the higher education systems and institutions across Europe (e.g. funding, quality assurance, models of university governance, qualifications structure, etc.)

This study is accounting for the historical development of ideas and concepts. It is however focused on what can be referred to as the 'Western world' and its industrial and post-industrial eras. Hence, I will account for the context in terms of history of ideas and political thought of the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe. Here Europe is emphasised as limitation, since the

conclusions on ideas will be based on the public philosophies, modalities of thinking and other cultural specifics of the 'Western tradition'. This prevents the conclusions on ideas to be acclaimed of universal or that the rules and regularities can be applied to other cultural formations.

The structure of the monograph

The body of text is essentially divided into three parts. Part I is dedicated to the presentation of the research project, the analytical framework, methods and the research design. There I present the, the matter and the approaches used in the research. I present and argue about the choice of the theoretical schools, the way I used the analytical tools and what are the advantages and shortcomings of the research design.

Part II represents the core of this dissertation. In this part I interpret the data and the observations from the field work. Chapter 4 is a sort of a pathfinding analysis of the Bologna Process decade between 1998 and 2010. It offers a longitudinal overview and a pan-European perimeter of policy interaction. In this Chapter interpreted the first conceptual categories that lead to further data collection and interpretations presented in Chapters 5 – 7. The latter Chapters deal with the Bologna-related policy forums, concepts and actors that in a broader sense constituted the coordinative sphere where the discourses and ideas on the Europeanisation of higher education were elaborated, articulated, justified, confronted, negotiated and contested. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the discourses ideas and the logic of communication within the EU organisational structure. In this Chapter I interpreted the ideas on higher education that the EU Commission conveys through its discourse, the process of policy construction between the EU Commission and other EU institutions, the flow of ideas, the actors and agency behind the discursive action and the response of the EU to the global trends in higher education. Chapter 9 is also dedicated to the EU, but from another angle. There I present the extent to which the EU law extends into the realm of higher education, the underlying ideas and the involved actors.

Part III is dedicated to the historical contextualisation, theorising and further interpretation of the findings in in part II. I start with the historical background, pondering the development of the ideas on higher education from 19 century onwards (Chapter 10). I continue with the describing and explaining of the emerging discourses and ideational trends in connection to the broader historical and structural context of the Western world (Chapters 11 and 12).

Part I

2. The research approach

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the overview, critical reflection and a more detailed insight into the chosen design construction of research approach. Particular attention is paid to the central analytical approach –discursive institutionalism. Thereafter I presented the complementary school of thought that I utilized in this dissertation - the Neo-Gramscian theory of international relations.

2.1 The overview

In the following section I briefly outlined the selection of approaches. The selected analytical approach is a combination of mainly two schools of thought, therefore I presented also the discussion on blending analytical traditions.

In more than a decade since I first met with the higher education policy forum on the European level I have often studies, papers, books that address this or that aspect of reform process. On the one hand, the pieces that undertook a more critical stance often venture into a normative/ideologically biased terrain. They tend to be based on a generic critique of the modern ideological hegemony, typical especially for the Western world (and proliferating fast around the globe), but yet they show only superficial acquaintance with higher education and pertaining reforms and processes. On the other hand, one can find an abundance of literature dedicated to various institutional and policy aspects of the transformation and change in single European countries (or sub-regions). Europeanisation processes are also addressed through single policy elements of various international policy scripts. Such studies are often limited to one theoretical school of thought and following the prescribed methical course of acquiring knowledge.

In this variety I have nevertheless somehow missed studies that would look at the fast evolving policy processes in higher education on the European and global scale from a larger perspective - digging under the mere technical and problem-oriented aspects and offering a critical view on ideas and social backdrop to policy trends, policy choices, policy scripts, changes, reforms, transformations and other aspects of contemporary higher education in Europe.

Overall approach of the study

The methodical way of gaining knowledge in this dissertation belongs predominantly to the interpretative sphere of social scholarship. The critical, meta-theoretical premises that helped guide my line of reasoning were chosen only after the first, inductive phase of research and were not fixed in the process of conceptualisations and generating knowledge. The relationship between the researcher and the matter under analysis is reflexive. Therein the researcher is engaged (as opposed to detached) and thus does not presume an objective and fully measurable reality; hence he/she cannot be "neutral". I ventured into the research project trying to keep conscious that the observer's report is to a certain extent a social construction derived from the data. The researcher discovers by interacting with the data and thereby constructs categories. He/she is inevitably linked to world views, values, methodological and philosophical stands, sociological theories and concepts, schools of thought etc. which provide the *conceptual roots* for categories to grow (Charmaz 1990: 1165).

The central analytical approach

For the above described reason I found the *discursive institutionalist* approach a suitable blend of institutionalist and constructivist traditions and chose it as the central analytical approach for this study. The term *discursive institutionalism* stands for an umbrella concept for a wide range of works in political science that focus on the *substantive content of ideas* and the *interactive processes of discourse* by which they are generated and communicated in a given *institutional context* (Schmidt 2008, Schmidt 2011). Discursive institutionalism implies two dimensions of discourse: ideas and interaction. Namely, besides the substantive content of ideas this analytical approach is also interested in what happens in the dynamic interaction of various actors. The analysis takes into consideration the institutional context of the actors and action (with reference to the sociological, historical and rational choice versions of new institutionalism), but it also focuses on the dynamics in the political/policy arenas (Schmidt 2011). In other words, the application of discursive institutionalism is particularly suitable in research focusing on political action, interaction and other dynamisms. Introducing elements such as *discursive*

(inter)action and the *logic of communication* into institutional analysis helps get the insight into what goes on beyond the static structures, how they are constructed, changed or maintained (Schmidt 2012a, 708).

Discursive institutionalist approach is flexible between a) constructivist view where agents are constructing institutional situation by using normative and cognitive frameworks and discursive process and b) institutionalist view in which institutions are constraining or empowering/enabling the actors (Schmidt 2012a, 710). In my study I took the course of viewing institutions both as (constraining/enabling) structures and constructs. In the micro analyses I thereby unfix the institutional structures. This for example contributes to interpreting and understanding the situations when agents move beyond the institutional constrains (norms, values, historical paths…) bringing forward ideas, defining the problems, and (on a larger scale constructing) new norms, beliefs, ideations or cause institutional changes.

Viewing the larger picture - the choice of complementary school of thought

In addition to the above listed variables, I also took into consideration the larger historic/structural background in which the analysed processes take place. For this purpose I reintroduced the structures (even though never as static parameters and entirely external to agents) on a macro level in an attempt to argue the larger ideational (ideological) shifts embedded in the social relations and configuration of social forces. In doing so I exploited the openness/flexibility of discursive institutionalism for linking it to neo-Gramscian approach to international relations (Cox 1981, Cox 1999, Cox 2005, Bleier 2002, Apeldoorn 2002, Gill 2003a).

In neo-Gramscian historical materialism the ideas and institutions[1] are juxtaposed to material conditions in forming the temporary social equilibrium between social forces. Namely, the dialectical triangle between ideas, institutions and material (economic) conditions forms a historical structure which represents the framework for action in a given historical period (Cox 1981, 137). This dialectic can apply to a particular cultural formation (e.g. nation state) or transcend the national and even inter-civilizational boundaries (Gill 2003a, 50). By extending the concepts beyond the nation state, the neo-Gramscian transnationalism provided a more elaborate account on the transnational and international social relations, the pertaining relations of power, the role of international civil society, and above all it contributed to understanding of

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[1] Both are key concepts also in discursive institutionalism

the broader ideational platform at the origin of ideas and discourses detected in the European higher education policy/political arena.

In my research project I moved closer to those scholars whose enquiry is directed to the relationship between the generation, circulation and mediation of discourses, their connection to the deeper structures of power that shape institutions, and how these discourses construct institutions and broader social world (Robertson 2008, 91). My research aims were considerably different from the research aims of scholars that recur to problem solving, positivistic and empirical science based approaches. I followed the school that neither takes the existing social order as granted or a given parameter. Investigating its origins and the framework in which the observed processes take place contributes to constructing the larger picture of the whole (Cox 1981, 129).

2.2 Blending theories and analytical approaches in an attempt to explore and interpret the complex social world

The multitude of changes in the broader social, political and economic backdrop and the accompanying shift of the policy coordination and appearance of transnational and international soft governance mechanisms (most often not legally-binding) implies new dimensions in higher education relevant to this study and brought me to the use of a multi-theoretical and multi-methodical approach.

By handling such matter it is easy to fall into the trap of simplifying the complex reality into conspiracy theories. Therefore the challenge in addressing the issue lies in encompassing broader social concerns, yet not losing focus on the original object of research – higher education in modern Europe. On the other hand, the object of this study is to look beyond the single aspects, subtopics, mechanisms, policy instruments, or other problems addressed by many higher education research projects of today[2]. In presenting the choice of analytical framework (below) I proposed extensive arguments in favour of blended approach instead of singular approach in order to meet the requirements of this particular research project. According to Sil and Katzenstein (2010, 413) singular research traditions establish their

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[2] Not to be misunderstood: I do not dismiss such studies as irrelevant. Quite the opposite – I have often been inspired and guided by them.

identities and boundaries by insisting on enduring foundational issues, effectively privileging some concepts over others, rewarding certain methodological norms and practices, but not the others, and placing great weight on certain aspects of social reality while ignoring others, which leads a researcher into a practice of neglecting the aspects of a complex reality that do not fit within the meta-theoretical parameters of such a singular tradition.

I find it essential for the type of scholarly enquiry to which this study aspires, to be more open ended and to draw from a broader range of scholarly traditions in order to avoid simplification and go beyond mere knowledge claims about particular/isolated aspects of reality. The choice of drawing from more than one theoretical and methodical tradition is closely linked to the choice of gradually constructing the theoretical and analytical framework around the object of research. This was carried out partly through fieldwork and partly through desk research. Of course, a considerable effort was put in assuring the compatibility and studying potential contradictions between chosen theoretical approaches.

Another motive for using multiple approaches is the greater potential for interpreting the findings in the bigger picture of the social world. Namely the blend of methods hereby used is subscribing to those research traditions that are directed to the *social and political complex as a whole* rather than separate parts, leading to the construction of the larger picture of the whole of which the initially contemplated part is just one component, and seeks to understand the processes of change in which both parts and whole are involved (Cox 1981, 129).

Not least, the choice of inductive approach in the initial phases of data analyses is yet another reason why my research was by nature not designed to adhere to a singular theoretical or analytical framework. The first (exploring) steps of the research brought forward the conceptualizations that substantially contributed to further argument. In the successive phase these were further interpreted with the help of existing theories and analytical traditions. In this case the benefit of blending is in multiplicity of links between mechanisms and social processes conceptualised or explained separately in each of the engaged research traditions (Sil and Katzenstein 2010, 415). So it is possible to generate a more comprehensive understanding of complex, multifaceted problems and make them relevant for the scholarship and policy practice alike.

Blending various theoretical and analytical categories might also lead to many controversies and is often subject to critique. For instance, when combining several traditions there is a risk of incommensurability of concepts, terminology and other elements which might cause

theoretical incoherence. In order to minimize this challenge, I carefully picked traditions for which I argued have enough in common to be compatible. This was especially necessary because I have not come across similar blending in the existing literature on higher education or in a broader scope of research. The details on the technology of blending the approaches and the compatibility of the two major approaches were explained below in several points of Part II.

In the following chapters I present the analytical framework in detail. The priority is given to an overview of the angles from which ideas, discourses and context are addressed. Among these I placed considerable emphasis on the ideational and discursive shift in the institutionalist tradition.

2.3 Focusing ideas

Before passing on to one particular member of the family of ideational analyses – the discursive institutionalism – a broader context and tenets of the theoretical ground for this approach are presented in Chapter 2.3. I found this necessary and useful in order to clearly elaborate on the choice of approach in correlation to the matter of this research project and the guiding questions.

The study of ideas belongs to the interpretative sphere of social sciences – more precisely to the of social constructivist milieu. The basic tenet of the ideational perspective is that the world is socially constructed: ideas form the foundation of this construction and are often the inspiration to act. People develop sets of ideas to make sense of the world, while ideas guide actions and shape interactions between people. Shared ideas lead to routine practices and give rise to institutions (Beland and Cox 2011, 12, 13). Hence, the constructivist perspective represents a decisive shift from the rationalist (positivist) traditions. Perhaps a good way to start with the presentation of ideational analyses is to correlate it with some of the other approaches.

Specifics of ideational analysis

According to Beland and Cox (2011) non-ideational theories often (over)emphasize variously conceptualized structures and objective positioning that determine the behaviour of individuals or represent the root cause of processes and tensions in society. In its interpretative dimension the study of ideas distances itself from exclusively materialist explanation of human action such

as in deductive and positivistic approach of behaviourism or materialist (economistic) approach of the family of Marxist traditions (Beland and Cox 2011,6). For comparison: the Marxist approaches reduce the political action to the material interests stemming from economical background and the pertaining class structure. Similarly in some liberal traditions the logic of rational interests (that guide individuals and interest groups) represents the core element (Parsons 2011, 128). For more orthodox Marxist traditions as well as for rational choice theories, ideas are epiphenomena. According to these schools, cognition is a process of revealing interests as opposed to the constructivist view (including ideational analyses) where cognition stands for the process of explaining the world through interpreting (Hay 2011, 71).

Ideational explanation (by contrast to the objective positioning/structure) is built on the notion that action can vary independently from objective positioning (Parsons, 2011). This emerges as an alternative and an evolution from the static analysis with emphasis on structure. Namely, while the structure oriented approaches might well serve in linear and stable social circumstances, they fail to account for the fluidity and boiling that according to ideational analysts constitute the surface and core of this world (Blyth 2011, 87). Instead of viewing change as something exogenous, the ideational scholars consider it as a response to new perception of things. Ideas are product of cognition. They are produced in our minds and are connected to the material world through our interpretations (Beland and Cox 2011, 11).

Accounting for (abrupt) changes

Accounting for historical changes, including the abrupt ones, is one of the most eloquent advantages of the ideational approaches. Even though I did not deal with a particularly abrupt historical change during my research project, I find the accounting for change one of the tenets of ideational approach that can substantially contribute to the interpretation of change in policies and ideations of higher education in contemporary Europe.

In general, the ideational approach can deal with seemingly unexplainable abrupt changes in history or transitions in paradigms and ideologies because it leaves room for historical specifics and agency. In these cases fixed external structures such as interests of actors (calculation), historical path (path dependence) and normative setting are considered as vaguer and prone to alteration[3]. According to Blyth (2011) crises lead to uncertainty about actors' interests and make them re-orient (or enhance) their sense of self-interest influenced by competing political

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[3] In Gramsci's (2000) terms they are historically specific or subject to conjuncturalfactors

narratives. He demonstrated how these circumstances represent the trigger moments for ideational contestation, and open the doors for the emergence and relevance of particular new ideas. Ideas therefore have both a stabilizing influence (with what the new-institutionalism scholars would agree) and transformative potential in situations of extraordinary uncertainty. Blyth's analysis draws from three new-institutionalisms in examining the constrains related to pre-existing institutional orders in combination with considering ideas and agents as transformative engines providing blueprints for stabilizing and coordinating expectations, helping build new coalitions for change and providing scientific and normative foundations for this change. Such conceptualization of change is very close to what the central approach of this study - the discursive institutionalism - builds upon. Namely the ideations of problems and solutions by the actors are followed by the legitimization and justification process. In this process the actors are making use of well elaborated discourses in order to transform the cognitive arguments (necessity) to normative justification (appropriateness) (Schmidt 2008, 307).

The analytical blends of ideational analyses have been used to interpret events in history which couldn't be explained with approaches that were *stuck* with understanding cultural, political and economic structures as parameters. Moreover, ideational approaches accounted for how in different institutional settings the same ideas underpinned the policies to respond to the crisis and brought about normative and institutional changes of extraordinary scale or vice versa – where in similar settings the ideas lead to divergent course of action. Ideational analysts for example accounted for the emergence of social democracy before/after the world wars and the ideational causality behind different paths of the Social Democratic thought and action in Germany and Sweden (Berman 2011); the shift in post-World War II European integration (Schmidt 2008, 318); and the relatively abrupt shift in economic policies in the 70s and 80s in Europe and the USA (Parsons 2011). The crises where ideational activity takes place usually cut deep into the texture of society and its structures. In these periods in time it is especially *new ideas* that matter more (rather than ideas in general). Once the crisis is phased out and a new paradigm settles down, the ideas actors hold may become internalized and unquestioned once again, but this does not mean that they cease to count (Hay 2008, 70). I came back to the matter of stability and changes later, in the Subchapter 2.4.

Even though it is difficult to claim a situation of abrupt historical change of which the examined transformation of higher education would be an integral part, it is possible to argue that the higher education reform ideas on the European level emerged in a period of instability in the

institutional setting where higher education is embedded. EU initiatives and especially the Bologna Process emerged in a period of transition and necessity of a new equilibrium in the utterly changed higher education due to the massification in conjunction with the exogenous changes in broader society (Olsen 2009; Halvorsen and Nyhagen 2011). The latter are especially linked to the post-Fordist economy (with changed nature of labour demand), post-Keynesian individual responsibility political rationale, and shrinking of the state in favour of privatization of public goods and services (Jessop 2008, 31).

Ideas and agency

One of the main questions emerging from ideational perspective is where ideas come from during these moments of uncertainty and why some prevail over the others. The ideationalists explain the institutional change by reference to the ideas that inform agents' responses to moments of uncertainty and crisis (Blyth 2002[4]). In contrast, some structure-oriented explanations look into the structural location and source of power and the consequent depiction of the crises. For instance, approaches that advocate fixed structures guiding the action, try to trace leaders' endorsement of certain outcomes back to clear environmental pressures. This for instance fails to account for the big projects (e.g. European integration) which were conceived by certain members of governments, parties, or interest groups and often advanced past widespread reluctance or outright hostility of the same groups – e.g. Miterand's socialists opposing the monetary union (Parsons 2011, 129). Even though it is possible to find objective (or inter-subjectively present) compelling circumstances, it is sometimes not enough to explain a choice of action. There is a balance needed between structural explanations and ideational (constructivist) views. The enquiry has to interpret the ideas, norms, beliefs and practices that lead to that action. It is necessary to suggest the logic by which certain ideas connected indeterminate environmental constrains and incentives to a specific strategy or action (Parsons 2011, 135).

On the other hand, it is also important that the ideational analysis does not give way to the temptation of overstating the claim on role of ideas. A sound enquiry should also accommodate structural prerequisites in providing the account of institutional change (Hay 2008, 72). This said, one is still confronted with the challenge to account for when ideas count and how much. Parsons (2011, 136) suggests that if people with similar positions in the same landscape propose different course of action then we can conclude that constrains at the level of their shared

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[4] Cited in Hay (2008, 72)

position allow for different interpretations (at least as different as the difference between two proposed ideas for action). This gives the basis for the claim that interpretations make a difference. Parsons argues further that where ideas cross-cut the positioning in social structure we have a method to suggest a distinct ideational causality. Yet the point is not that our world is riddled with ideas strongly cross-cutting all kinds of structural and institutional positioning. Most ideas run parallel to some structural and institutional lines for the very good reason that mostly rational human beings do tend to form their ideas with some regard to salient aspects of inter-subjectively present (objective) structural and institutional obstacle courses (Parsons 2011, 137).

Epistemologically, the ideational approach leaves some issues open. Ideas cannot be seen and are sometimes hard to track down, which renders it difficult to tell when they have strong influence on political behaviour and outcomes (Beland and Cox 2011, 13). I therefore argue that ideational analysis needs a complementary theory/analytical approach and methods in order to detect the ideas and connect them to political action. This is especially relevant when it comes to larger scale ideas, underlying a specific historical situation and predisposing the ideational preferences on a micro level.

In this study I deemed it necessary to interpret the hierarchy of ideas or in other words to answer the question of why some ideas persist over time and prevail over the others. The issue of power, social relations, social forces, dominant political rationalities need to be addressed and were addressed in this dissertation through the engagement of neo Gramscian theory in international relations (as a complementary approach). But before that, in the next section I presented in a more precise detail the central element of the analytical framework - the *discursive institutionalism*. Discursive institutionalism is an ideational approach that draws from both institutionalist and constructivist traditions to make possible the exploring and explaining the changes and stability in social world. At the same time this approach leaves room for combining it with some of the broader theoretical traditions and analytical methods to complement it, which makes it suitable for my purpose.

2.4 Discursive institutionalism – ideas and discourse in the new institutionalism tradition

The *Discursive institutionalism* (Schmidt 2008; Schmidt 2011) represents the foundation on which the analytical framework for this study was developed. Thereby (and in line with the above presented) I adhered to ideational explanation in studying political processes and the social world. This type of discursive approach introduces constructivist views into institutionalist tradition. It brings together insights from neo-institutionalism and elements of some discourse theories in an attempt to conceptually relate discourses and institutions (Arts and Buizer 2009, 340).

Discursive institutionalism as discursive approach

In the plethora of discursive approaches it is difficult to outline the common denominator. Many versions of discourse theory and analysis being in use nowadays have in common the aim to understand the social world by means of ideational and symbolic systems and orders. They explain human action through human interpretation and the search for meaning, thus take a constructivist view point. It is neither rational calculations nor social or cultural norms that drive human behaviour and choice, but (collective) ideas, interpretation and meanings attached to the world and its integral parts. According to these schools, human agencies construct discourses by giving meaning to the world. Discourses bring about the change, but also collide with the existing discourses which are embedded in the existing (or out-phasing) institutional/ideational order. All this shows the importance of agency and structural character of discourse in the discourse theoretical literature (Arts and Buizer 2009, 341).

Some other discourse theories focus on the relations between discourse, power and knowledge (Foucault 1998). According to some post-modernist schools of thought, discourse can be both the instrument and the effect of power. It produces, transmits, reinforces, undermines and thwarts power. In like manner silence and secrecy are shelter for power (Foucault 1998, 96). Discourse analysts arising from (post)structuralist tradition are sometimes unfairly criticized for their tendency to stick to the search for free floating ideas, meanings and concepts in the texts or societies (Arts and Buizer 2009, 340). This exaggerated fame of postmodernists' interpretations of the texts without contexts and to their understanding of reality as all words, whatever the deeds, often causes the scholars' reluctance to take discourse into the centre of their enquiry (Schmidt 2008, 305).

Discursive institutionalism, as many other contemporary discursive approaches considers text, context and action. Discourse as defined by Schmidt, serves as a more generic term that encompasses not only the substantive content of ideas but also the interactive process by which

ideas are conveyed (Schmidt 2010, 3). Hence, discourse is not only about structures (what is said where and how) but also agency (who said what to whom) (Schmidt 2008, 305). With discursive institutionalism it is possible to analyse discourse in order to explore and interpret how new structures are constructed, old ones deconstructed or maintained through time and how through history the incremental and abrupt changes of micro and macro structural frameworks occur. Discourse as an interactive process enables actors to affect institutions (Schmidt 2008, 316).

Main tenets of discursive institutionalism as analytical approach

Vivien Schmidt developed a comprehensive analytical framework ready to be used in research projects, especially in political sciences. In its essence, the discursive institutional scholarship focuses primarily on the substantive content of ideas and on the interactive process of discourse in generating, coordinating, deliberating, or communicating these ideas in a given institutional context (Radaelli and Schmidt 2004; Schmidt 2008; Schmidt 2010; Schmidt 2009a; Schmidt 2011; Schmidt 2012a). Therefore, in discursive institutionalist analysis (unlike some other discourse analytical traditions), the political and policy spheres of action, the actors and the context are as equally important as the texts.

One of the crucial elements in Schmidt's discursive institutionalism is the importance she attributes to ideational foundation of institutions when explaining social and institutional change. She focuses on agency – especially on *subjective ideational* and *inter-subjective discursive realm.* Discursive institutionalism implies dual conceptualization of discourse: as carrier of ideas and as interaction. Institutional dynamics originate from the relation between discourse, ideas and institutions whereby the ideas, brought about by discourse (e.g. in form of problems, concepts, public philosophies, narrative etc.) have the power to affect the political process and its outcomes. Thus, discourse is considered as an independent variable determining political processes and political change. It is understood as an exchange of ideas and so it contributes to the interpretation of the flow of ideas from individual thought to collective action. Action is constituted by articulation, discussion, deliberation, and legitimization of actors' (cognitive or normative) ideas about action. Political and policy processes which are interpreted through the *logic of communication* are one of the central analytical interests of discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2010, 16). The use of logic of communication makes the discursive institutionalism adequate to interpret the role of sentient agents in the institutional change.

According to Schmidt (2008, 314; 2010, 4), *institutions* represent the context in which the discursive interaction occurs. They are conceived as external but yet internal to sentient agents acting as *constructs of meaning* (result of their thoughts, words and action) and *structures of meaning* internal to sentient agents. Institutions are on the one hand constructed by agents, while on the other hand they are constraining the agents, limiting their discretion of acting. In some circumstances the institutions can enable the agents to create, maintain and conceive of changing those institutions. Moreover, institutions are internal to 'sentient' (thinking and speaking) agents whose 'background ideational abilities' explain how they create and maintain institutions at the same time that their 'foreground discursive abilities' enable them to communicate critically about those institutions, to change (or maintain) them (Schmidt 2008, 314). In discursive institutionalism, observing this dynamism makes it possible to interpret the change and/or stability of social world. I will come back to these fundamental elements of discursive institutionalism in more detail below.

Discursive institutionalism refers to a broader family of approaches that blend constructivist and institutionalist tradition and make discourse and ideas the central object of their enquiry. One such subsidiary approach is for example *Constructivist Institutionalism* elaborated by Colin Hay (Hay 2008; Hay 2011). According to Schmidt (2012a, 708) the distinguishing characteristic of this variation is a more far-reaching and decisive reliance on constructivist tradition (also delineated in the name). However, in my view there is no clear division line between Schmidt's and Hay's analytical frameworks, at least not one relevant for this study. Therefore, constructivist institutionalism is considered another "face" of discursive institutionalism and from here on not referred to as a separate school.

2.4.1 Discursive institutionalism as the fourth new institutionalism

As mentioned above, discursive institutionalism grows out of the three so-called new institutionalisms (rational choice; historical and sociological institutionalisms). These three schools revived and built upon the institutionalist tradition. Discursive institutionalism thus shares with the other new institutionalisms a core focus on the institutions and their importance in shaping the social world. It however differs in its definition of institutions, in its objects and logics of explanation, and in the ways in which it deals with change (Schmidt 2010, 4).

The three older new institutionalisms are all emphasizing the structurally determined political action. In sociological institutionalism action is framed by cultural, normative setting. The agents act in accordance with the logic of appropriateness. According to historical institutionalism action is shaped by the logic of historical path dependence, whereas in rational choice institutionalism, action is structured by rationalist incentives with the logic of calculation, consequences and economic benefits. The original versions of the three older new-institutionalisms tend to provide analytical ground for explaining continuity, but are less useful when we need to explain change (Schmidt 2010, 14). Institutions that they defined have had a tendency to be overly "sticky," and the agents (where they exist) have been largely fixed in terms of preferences or fixated in terms of norms (Schmidt 2008, 313). Such conceptualization would not leave much of the open possibility for accounting for what happens in a policy or political process following the actors' discursive engagement. This drawback can emerge when actors change the perception of their interests or when the normative context informing the actors' position is changing. In discursive institutionalist view, the latter can happen also with the agency of these same actors.

Discursive institutionalism is an attempt to generate more complex understandings on how structural constrains (particularly norms, values, world views, but also historical path dependence) can interact with discursive and symbolic practices, ideational flow and the agents abilities to influence the institutions and the course of change (Schmidt 2012a, 708). Discursive institutionalists have challenged the older new institutionalisms ontologically - about what institutions are and how they are created, maintained and changed; and epistemologically - about what and how we can know about institutions (Schmidt 2008, 313).

Hence, besides explaining the unexpected by accounting for unique events, discursive institutionalism can make those events more predictable/expectable basing the analysis on a particular set of *ideational rules* and *discursive regularities* in a given *meaning context*, following a particular *logic of communication* – rather than being based on rationalist interests following a logic of calculation, historical regularities following the logic of path dependence, or cultural norms following the logic of appropriateness (Schmidt 2008, 314).

However, more recently all scholars from the three traditions moved on to combinatorial logic, relaxing the meta-theoretical postulates and broadening the analytical boundaries among discrete research traditions in order to explain a wider range of phenomena, employing a wider range of analytical constructs, and considering the relativity of what in a more orthodox view

was treated as a parameter. By stretching the analytic perimeter, they open the door for more self-consciously eclectic approaches to the study of institutional change (Sil and Katzenstein 2010, 416).

In summary, by pushing further the already eclectic spirit of the new institutionalisms and blending the arguments of each of them, Schmidt argued how each of the older three new institutionalisms is deficient standing alone. The older new institutionalisms can be used to inform the analysis of the discursive action by shedding light on the institutional background where the ideas develop or why a particular actor acts in this or that way. But discursive institutionalism is also curious about what happens in the action itself (marked by the concept of the *logic of communication*), which sometimes turns out differently from what the older new institutionalists would predict (Schmidt 2008, 314).

Schmidt extended the new institutionalist tradition by adding elements of other research traditions, above all by introducing the observation of discourse and ideas (constructivist dimension) in the institutional context, but also left the possibility for extending her approach with macro theories (Schmidt 2008, 2010, 2011). The latter was embraced in this dissertation by introducing neo-Gramscian critical approach in Chapter 2.5.

2.4.2 Critique of Discursive institutionalism

Discursive institutionalism has been developed relatively recently; therefore it is too early to claim a solid pool of critique from where it would be possible to take a critical reference to this approach. Some of the critique relates to direct use of discursive institutionalism in addressing various concrete issues, mainly from the field of European integration (Schmidt 2009a). These critiques address particular findings and are therefore not so relevant in the case of this dissertation.

A more relevant critique in form of theoretical argument about analytical approach as such can be found in the writings of scholars who pledge their allegiance to the older three new institutionalisms. For example, Stephen Bell argues that there is no need for another new institutionalism. According to him the other three can do what the more constructivist use of institutional approach (where discursive institutionalism belongs) tries to introduce into the new institutionalist tradition (Bell 2011, Bell 2012). Bell argues that discursive institutionalism

excessively privileges the agency while losing sight of the significance of institutional and wider structural variables which, in his view, inevitably shape agency and institutional change (Bell 2011, 884). He criticizes the degree of discretion attributed to the actors. Namely, according to him the agency in discursive institutionalism is almost unimpeded, while agents construct the world in any way they see fit. Furthermore, Bell asserts that the outstanding ideational emphasis in discursive institutionalism is at times even veering towards postmodern accounts where ideas, inter-subjective meanings and discourse wholly define or constitute social and institutional life (Bell 2011, 889).

Schmidt (2012s) rejects this characterization of her work explaining that she developed a flexible approach on the continuum between institutionalist view of constraining structures and constructivist (ideationalist) view of institutions as (enabling) constructs of meaning external and yet internal to sentient agents. Therefore she still leaves the determining role to institutions, but in a more flexible fashion, like for example in the time of uncertainty or crisis the role of institution decreases and the manoeuvring space for agents and ideas comes into foreplay (which is well elaborated also by Blyth (2011). A careful reading of the polemics between Bell (2011, 2012) and Schmidt (2012a) can also lead to the conclusion that the two views converge to a great extent, especially on loosening the institution-heavy ("sticky") versions of institutional theory in explaining change in order to give more explanatory role to agency. In fact Bell's conceptualization of institutions is according to my reading of his critique strikingly similar to Vivien Schmidt's one.

What was for this study nevertheless worth considering in Bell's critique of discursive institutionalism is the conceptual distinction between institutions and structures (despite the fact that often the institutionalist theories use these two terms interchangeably). With allusion to Marx's argument that "men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please", Bell (2011) suggests the necessity to take into consideration more decisively the broader historical context in which agency takes place. He goes on with proposing that institutions can act as key mediating influences between agents and wider structures. The agents' immediate institutional context can partially constrain the agency, but the agents are also operating in broader structural settings that constantly evolve and thereby sometimes open new opportunities for agents. The wider structural context is separated from the institutions and represents a number of external political factors which reinforce path dependency or change environmental conditions that alter institutional power distributions. Structures represent broader political, economic and social environment establishing incentives, disincentives or

rationales for action that may lead agents to favour certain developments or choices over the others. Structures can both constrain and enable the agents (Bell 2011, 898, 899). Similarly to Schmidt (2008, 2012), social, economic and political structures shape and are shaped by agents over time and as the time passes the pattern of constraint and enablement can also change systematically. Here Bell touches upon conceptualizations used by scholars in the traditions such as *cultural political economy* (Jessop 2008) and thereby opens up a discussion on the larger picture of social stability and change.

The above presented critique was partly considered by the use of complementary analytical approach. The larger structural backdrop was introduced into the overall analytical framework by meaningfully blending in the neo-Gramscian school (see Chapter 2.5). The chosen complementary approach views the framework of action underpinned by a particular, historically specific configuration of material conditions, institutions and ideas/ideologies and thereby accounts for the larger picture of social world in which action takes place (Cox 1981). The blending was possible due to the open-endedness of discursive institutionalism and its compatibility with historicist, critical approach. By this sort of eclectic intervention I filled the void left by the discursive institutionalism when it comes to larger context (structures).

2.4.3 Unpacking of discursive institutionalism and its use in this study

Below I presented in more detail the characteristics, concepts and elements of the discursive institutionalism that were included in this research project. In my dissertation it is important to observe the discursive interaction in combination with the context, especially the political/social processes, normative settings, economical rationalities and historical paths in order to detect/decipher ideas, the hierarchy between them and their role in institutional stability or change.

Ideational dimension of the discourse: Cognitive and normative ideas

Discursive institutionalism (informed by the Sociological institutionalism) attributes an important role to norms and values in the construction of social world and perception of interests. Changes happen in accordance with the cognitive and normative elements in the environment that shape the action in a context of taken-for-granted norms, values and beliefs (Gornitzka 1999, 191). Yet the discursive institutionalism involves the agents who are

concretizing and materializing ideas about problems and necessary policy solutions. Accordingly, the content of ideas and the pertaining ideational discursive activity is divided into *cognitive* and *normative* types (Schmidt 2008).

Cognitive ideas respond to an ideated (constructed) necessity and often follow the perceived interest-based logic (see also the section on interests below). Cognitive dimension of communication encompasses causal beliefs or knowledge in the sense of collectively shared validity claims with regard to cause- and effect-relationships (Boerzel and Risse 2009, 6). Actors are using cognitive ideas to address and solve problems or bring about the desired change. They make sense of the reality relying on knowledge, policy analysis, information about problems, actors and resources (Radaelli and Schmidt, 364).

Therefore cognitive ideas often root in a broader political imaginaries and orders of discourse, created e.g. by policy advisers within influential (hegemonic) think tanks. The task of these think tanks, research offices, etc. is to formulate seemingly logic and evidence-based constructs, often adjusting various theoretical concepts and paradigms which can be easily translated into a range of policies (Jessop 2008, 24). The policies based on cognitive ideas are presented as solutions to the identified (constructed) problems, thereby justified as a necessary course of action (Schmidt 2008, 306). Through the process of normalization and institutional embedding the ideas become codified, serving as cognitive filters through which actors come to interpret environmental signals and, in doing so, to conceive their own interests (Hay 2011, 69). Normalization is in other words when cognitive ideas take over the normative character (see below). For example the cognitive dimension may come into play in the context of and relation to economic strategies where actors identify problems and propose solutions with the aim of affecting the chosen economic indicators.

The normative activity of the discourse's ideational dimension is characterized by assessing and judging reality, which thus refers to the world of norms, values, beliefs and principles (Radaelli and Schmidt 2004, 364). *Normative ideas* follow the logic of appropriateness and attach values to political action. They serve to legitimize policies in relation to the expectation of general public and simultaneously resonate the normative and value background. The actors use the arguments of compliance with the principles, traditions, and values (Schmidt 2008, 307). Higher education is a social institution that is deeply embedded in the normative system of the Western world and therefore exposed to broader social reflection and consideration of its impact on the kind of society people live or want to live in.

Normalisation and institutionalisation of ideas

Sometimes there is a thin or blurry line between normative and cognitive nature of ideas. In certain cases agents link the appropriateness argumentation to cognitive ideas following an intensive process of *normalization* and institutional embedding (mentioned above). Cognitive ideas become codified and presented as a seemingly obvious solution. Often ideas are promoted by think tanks, organizations from civil society and intergovernmental political level. These organizations collect and produce knowledge, evidence, argumentation, etc. in order to generate a collectively shared validity of cognitive ideas and thereby contribute to the dominant ideational framework or economic/political imaginaries and provide powerful rationales for action (Jessop 2008, 17; Cox 1981, 145). In certain cases where ideas take position in larger social structures and pertaining political rationalities, the legitimation of ideas shifts from the necessity rationale to appropriateness argument.

In a broader sense, this process also indicates the shift from dynamic to static, as ideas transit from the communicative action to their more stable and "fixed" position in the institutional fabric. This might also involve the shift of ideas to a higher level of generality (see Chapter 2.5). The transition of ideas from discursive spheres to institutional background was in this dissertation referred to as *institutionalisation* of ideas. Besides turning ideas into norms (a more sociological institutionalism view), the institutionalisation of ideas can also be used as the term of reference for the process when ideas are transformed through discourse into (perceived) interests or portrayed as part of the historical course (historic and rational choice institutionalism view). The latter should not be confused with Schmidt's conceptualisation of cognitive and normative ideas.

Normalisation and institutionalisation of ideas proved to be an essential element of the logic of communication and one of the outstanding phenomena observed in this study. For example in the context of the EU economic imaginaries the normalisation unfolds through the argumentative chain that serves to essentialise "competitiveness" of Europe as quasi-naturally given and thus the necessary background for any policy at EU level (Fairclough and Wodak 2008, 115). In the discursive institutionalist fashion it is not the mere power of economic interests and economic nature of the EU that are propelling this process, but a dialectics involving ideas, discourses and institutional backdrop that makes this appear as the principal interest or necessity.

Interactive dimension of the discourse: coordinative and communicative discourses

According to discursive institutionalism, the text alone is only the initial point of discourse analyses which extends into the enquiry about what is the context of the discourse, who generated it, what are the relations between actors and what were the circumstances. Pursuing this purpose Schmidt (2008, 2010 and 2011) conceptualized the interactive process and space through which the discourse represents ideas in two distinctive forms: *Coordinative* and *communicative* discourses. The interactive dimension introduces both agency and institution into the analytical framework of the discourse. Observing actors engaged in discursive practice enables the researcher to connect ideas to action and to show how actors convey inter-subjective meaning and enact norms and values (Radaelli and Schmidt 2004, 365).

In the *policy sphere* (as opposed to the *political sphere* below) various agents such as civil servants, elected officials, organized interest groups, activists etc. coordinate ideas, and construct policies through *coordinative discourse*. The coordinative sphere of discourse is dominated by policy elites and is usually present in the systems where there is a tradition of intense coordination before the policy proposals are presented to the general public or brought to the legislative level.

Examples of policy sphere where coordinative discourse can be observed are federal states (e.g. Germany), various corporatist traditions of policy creation (e.g. Italy, Austria) and proportional electoral systems (e.g. Italy) (Schmidt 2008, 312). Besides being central in reaching agreement among policy actors, coordinative discourse is crucial also in legitimizing the agreement to those actors' different constituencies (Schmidt 2011, 60).

Coordinative discourse is common in the domain of individuals loosely connected in epistemic communities or more strongly linked into advocacy coalitions, discourse coalitions, advocacy networks, but it can also exist in the domain of individuals as policy entrepreneurs or mediators. These groups or individuals are bargaining (strategically acting) and arguing (persuading the necessity or appropriateness) in the process of creating, elaborating and justifying ideas on various levels and in a wide range of venues (Schmidt 2008, 310).

A very distinctive policy sphere where coordinative discourse is dominates the interaction and is also organized in epistemic communities is the EU institutional system (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013). Therefore the conceptualization of the policy sphere and coordinative discourse is an important element of analytical framework. Not only because the policy processes in the

EU institutions were analysed, but also because of the way the Bologna Process is organized. Namely, similarly to what Schmidt found for the EU (2011, 59), Bologna process can also be considered a coordinative venue, where predominantly coordinative discourse is generated. Bologna is essentially a process of coordination between governments on the common denominator of reforms in higher education in Europe. The inclusion of interest groups, international organizations, supranational authorities and social partners additionally contributes to the coordinative nature of Bologna discourses (see Chapter 4). But Bologna is not always the primary venue of generating discourse. This is why I also examined other venues where discourses are coordinated and conveyed to the Bologna policy arena, especially the EU institutions, where the coordinative discourse/sphere as analytical category will come again to the fore.

Communicative discourse is at home in the *political sphere* and consists of individuals and groups involved in presentation, deliberation and legitimating of political ideas to the general public (Schmidt 2008, 310). Communicative discourse is used in both top-down and bottom-up oriented processes. When the process is oriented top-down, it usually involves political leaders, public relation staff, spin doctors, party political activists as protagonists. When it occurs bottom-up, the main actors are the grassroots movements, organized interest groups, social movements, media, intellectuals, experts, opposition parties, etc. - all engaged in the communicative sphere with their initiatives, opposition and feedback to what was communicated by the political elite (ibid.). Communicative discourse is very common in the countries with majority (bipartisan) election system and in centralized political arrangements (e.g. France) where there is little bargaining and persuasion in generating policies but it takes intensive communication to persuade the public to accept the proposals and deliberate about them (Schmidt 2011, 60). The French case is touched upon also in Chapter 7 of this dissertation when dealing with the complexity of specific ideational formations rooted in the national normative settings and the domestic coordination of social forces (political sphere or civil society). This represents the institutional context that marks the government action in the international coordinative process (in the abovementioned case in the Bologna Process).

The communicative discourse that follows the agreement in the coordinative (policy) sphere is likely to be quite thin and of limited content intensity. Namely, the actors confronted their ideas already in the coordinative sphere. What comes out to the public is often a result of negotiation, bargaining and coordination and therefore not reflecting purely the actors' own ideas. Consequently the political leaders discourse tends to be very general, in order to avoid

jeopardizing any of the compromises previously made discretely (in private) among policy actors and policy elites (Schmidt 2011, 59). This very likely happens in the complex polities where the policy coordination of various types is traditionally very important like in the abovementioned cases (Schmidt 2009b).

Both the EU and the Bologna process are characterized by a quasi-pluralist structure and very weak contact with the electorate and therefore resemble more the policy spheres where there is little room for a significant magnitude of communicative discourse. In such cases the policies are usually implemented in the national environments with the argument of necessity to comply with European requirements (Lynggaard 2011; Radaelli and Schmidt 2004, 372). In Bologna all the parties involved can be considered policy elites, with the exception of organized interest groups like students and universities or social partners which discussed later in this study where the nature of some of these actors was examined more in depth. The issue of transnational and international policy elites producing policies which are implemented at the national levels without particular communicative action involved will be addressed with the help of neo-Gramscian conceptualization of European integration (Apeldoorn 2002; Gill 2003a; Bieler 2002).

Coordinative and communicative discourse and related policy and political sphere represent an important element in the conceptualization of various theatres of discursive (inter)action. For the purpose of this dissertation I often referred to Bologna Process as predominantly a policy sphere or arena. With this I conceptualized Bologna process as the venue of mainly coordinative actions and the pertaining discourses. In the cases when Bologna represents a discursive venue for the deliberation and contestation of the reform by the general public and various interest groups outside the mere policy procedure, the Bologna gains the characteristic of a political (communicative) arena/sphere.

Levels of ideas

Schmidt (2008, 2010, and 2011) categorises the ideas in terms of the level of generality and nature as they appear in texts, communications or other sources of ideas. There are three levels of generality: policy, programmatic and philosophical ideas.

The first level of ideas is closely linked to policy-making. It encompasses the solutions that policy-makers propose to respond to concrete and tangible policy problems. The *policy ideas* can be introduced as appropriate, necessary or rational - depending on their ideational

dimension (see above). The key question on this level is why some policy ideas transform into policy and why others do not. Kingdon (in Mehta 2011, 29) explains the process of ideas becoming policies at a point of conjunction between problems, policy solutions and politics. In this view there are two distinctive contributions to understanding the role of ideas in politics: the role of the policy entrepreneurs who use ideas to develop policies and the garbage can model showing how solutions often precede the problems they are supposed to solve.

The problem definition is a complex ideational process occurring on the second level of ideas or the *programmatic ideas*. Compared to policy ideas they are more basic, broader in scope, more systemic and far reaching. The programmatic level hosts issues that determine goals to be achieved, indicate the norms, methods/instruments to be applied and define the model that frames the more immediate policy ideas addressing concrete problems. Programmatic ideas are about more general paradigms, imaginaries, frames and rationalities (Schmidt 2008, 306).

Mehta (2011) especially emphasises the second level of ideas that are casted as *problem definitions*. These ideas represent a particular way of understanding, interpreting and constructing a complex reality. The way a problem is framed has a significant implication for the types of policy solutions (policy ideas) that will seem or appear desirable, and hence much of political argument is fought at the level of problem definition. Once a problem definition becomes dominant, it disqualifies policies that are not consistent with its way of describing the issue. While paradigms, public philosophies, zeitgeist, as it will be explained below, tend to evoke the notion of a single dominant idea that governs an area, the term problem definition evokes the fluid nature of constantly competing ideas that highlight different aspects of a given situation (Mehta 2011, 33).

In the same fashion Mehta (2011, 34) prefers to see problem definition as a contested process among players with varying levels of power and persuasiveness instead of as imposed by hegemonic elites or a reflection of social psyche. In this study I conceptualised the flow of programmatic ideas and problem definitions on the ground of actors' confrontation and exchange of views. However, I interpreted the programmatic ideas and policy problems with the Gramscian conceptualisation historically specific framework of action defined by the larger social forces and accompanied by the hegemonic ideologies and imaginaries. This allows for examining a wider range of actors to influence the coordination and generation of discourse without neglecting the power differences among them which is central to viewing the flows of ideas within the Bologna process later in this study.

European policy sphere as a multiple-actor venue of idea coordination brings into examination a range of different factors which contribute to the prevalence of one idea or another. One of the most relevant ones in Mehta's (2011, 36) classification is the *portrayal of issues*. In the context of this study this will apply to the discursive strategies, discursive instruments, use of the concepts, establishing causalities, using favourable evidence from commissioned research, effective storytelling and, most importantly, tying the definition of a problem to the widely accepted cultural symbol or value in order to make the ideas appear not only appropriate but also necessary and rational. Other factors determining the hierarchy of problem definition on programmatic level are the *nature of the venue*, which in this case is a multi-actor policy sphere with a multi-actor problem ownership. This denominates the struggle over who defines problems on the basis of what expertise. In this sense it is important to trace out where and how the ideas are generated, packaged in which discourses and brought about by which actor.

In the overall discussion on the confrontation of ideas I also considered the power relations and the larger social forces behind the ideational streams occurring on the third level of ideas. While policy and programmatic ideas are discussed, deliberated, changed and therefore they can be seen as foreground, the third level ideas – *philosophical ideas* – are generally positioned more in the background (Schmidt 2008, 306). They are at even more basic level and can function as world views, public philosophies or other forms of broader ideational frameworks such as *zeitgeist* (Mehta 2011, 41). The latter includes a set of cultural, social and economic assumptions which are very rigid and stable and have a broad influence on politics and society in the period they reign. This conceptualisation is especially relevant when the actors attempt to gain political legitimacy by referring to the normative/value framework or when programmatic ideas are acquiring the normative nature because of the shifts in hegemonic political imaginaries.

Interpreting the emergence of a particular public philosophy or zeitgeist requires careful historical reconstruction and process tracking which allows for the interplay of various material and ideational factors, seeking to chart how they were influential in the development of a set of meta-ideas and also to incorporate the possibility of creative agency on the part of those who helped bring about the transitions (Mehta 2011, 41). However, the philosophical level of ideas usually leaves a very vague empirical matter to grasp. Therefore the problem based, objectivist, positivist and empirically oriented social scientist usually do not engage with exploring the relations of power, ideologies, and social origins of inequality. It takes a considerable interpretative effort to portray the background ideational structures underlying the ideational

flows in the policy process (Schmidt 2008, 308). Since the analytical approach of this study also accounts for agency, the philosophical level will not be taken as an ultimate stream that overwhelmingly determines the action but, as Mehta (2011, 41) puts it, as one central input that has significant influence in various different aspects of the policy process. In interpreting the philosophical level of ideas and zeitgeist I will borrow from the conceptual framework of historical materialism and link them to hegemonic ideologies, imaginaries, rationalities (Apeldoorn 2002; Cox 1998; Cox 1999; Cox 2005). The latter concepts are founded on a broader conceptualisation of social world and framework for action, which contributes to the interpreting and understanding of the larger ideational backdrop of higher education in modern Europe (see Chapter 2.5).

Institutions and norms

As closely related to sociological institutionalism, discursive institutionalism presupposes collective approach to generating ideas. They are both situated on the continuum between positivism and constructivism, closer to the second (Schmidt 2011, 63). The difference between the former and the latter is characterized by a static-dynamic divide. In sociological institutionalism, for instance, the institutions are resulting from relatively fixed cultural frames (beliefs, norms and values), which are an obstacle for the implementation of governmental policies if there is no *normative match*, i.e. congruence between the values and norms underlying the policy and the identity and traditions of the organization (Gornitzka 1999, 10). This causes a fixed institutional cage in which explaining the change might represent a considerable challenge. Instead, in discursive institutionalism the norms (as well as institutions) are dynamic constructs. Change is seen to reside in the relationship between actors and the context in which they find themselves, between institutional "architects", institutionalized subjects, and institutional environments. Institutional change is subject to interaction between strategic conduct and strategic context within which it is generated (Hay 2008, 64).

For the purpose of this dissertation, institutions will be considered as a simultaneously given (fixed) context in which agents think, speak and act on one hand and agent contingent results of thought words and action on the other hand. The institutions are therefore internal to actors, serving both as structures that constrain actors and as constructs created and changed by those actors (Schmidt 2008, 314). Action is not limited to following the external rules like in all the new institutionalism perspectives (rationally calculated, historically determined or norm-appropriate), but is actively shaped by ideas (Schmidt 2010, 4, 14; Hay 2011, 67,68). The

discursive institutionalism thoroughly addresses the double nature of norms and institutions by conceptualization of agents' abilities.

Norms and institutions are also observed from a broader social constructivist perspective where the larger social structures are brought into the analytical framework (Schmidt 2008, 321). I extended the discursive institutionalism with the neo-Gramscian critical perspective also because I aimed at having a grasp of the larger framework of action informing the discursive action. In this framework norms are part of the institutional setting that (together with ideas and economic relations) underpin the hegemonic order and serve as a stabilizing element of the configuration of social forces (Cox 1981, 136).

Agency, agents' abilities and the logic of communication

In discursive institutionalism actors are viewed as strategic, seeking to realize certain goals in a complex context that favours certain strategies over others and must rely upon perceptions of that context. These perceptions are incomplete or reveal to be inaccurate only after the event (Hay 2008, 63). Despite the dialectics of agency-structure, the discursive action still occurs in an institutional context (Schmidt 2008). Therefore a clear view on the mutually constitutive relationship involving agency and structure and the multi-dimensional understanding of the structural context became crucial in order to interpret the ideations and meaning of higher education in modern Europe.

According to discursive institutionalism, institutional change is explainable across time through agents' ideas and discourse instead of remaining static. Institutions are discursively constructed and inter-subjective, therefore constantly exposed to change. Discursive institutionalism somehow unfixes the norms and preferences in order to give more space to agency as actors are both constrained by and constructing institutions which are internal to them (Schmidt 2011, 55). Vivien Schmidt brilliantly conceptualizes this blend of agency and structure amongst other with *background ideational abilities* and *foreground discursive abilities* of actors.

According to Hay (2008), actors operate in a world pervaded with institutions and ideas about institutions. Their perceptions about feasible, possible, legitimate, desirable are shaped by the institutional environment where they operate and existing policy paradigms or world views (Hay 2008, 65). The human action is constituted and constrained by structural background internal to agents. This makes them speak and act without the conscious. They are following the institutions and practice. But because institutions are conceptualized as internal to actors,

their action is a process in which agents create and maintain institutions by using what Schmidt (2008, 314) calls *background ideational abilities.*

Thus, background ideational abilities stand for agents' abilities to make sense of a given meaning context, that is, to 'get it right' in terms of the ideational rules or 'rationality' of a given discursive institutional setting (Schmidt 2011, 55). These abilities enable the actors and in the same time determine the substance and the course of political action. In the case of this study this would include perceptions of interests, bonds to national specifics, norms, beliefs, historical characteristics, etc.

Schmidt (2008, 315) seems to seek reconciliation with other philosophical, macro sociological theories and (post)structuralist approaches which emphasize viewing agents as immerged into a background understanding. In these schools the action is embedded in a reservoir of pre-articulated understanding which is activated in everyday practical situations (Wagenaar, 2011). The background ideational abilities can be compared to the Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *Habitus.* In this conceptualisation, human beings act following the institutions of a logic of practice while human activity can be neither seen as constitutive nor as constituted but both simultaneously (Bourdieu 1988). However, Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus doesn't tell us enough about the collective endeavour (processes) by which institutions change. It also underemphasizes the key component in human interaction that helps explain such change: discourse (Schmidt 2008: 315).

In this study it is particularly important how Schmidt's conceptualizing of the background ideational abilities came close to the Gramscian conceptualization of organic intellectual standing for the social origin of intellectuals and their role in organizing society, setting up complex mechanisms, interpreting reality, perpetuating ideas/ideologies and fulfilling other tasks in order to provide identities, homogeneity and stability of a hegemonic order, but also undermining and thwarting it (Gramsci 2000, 301; Apeldoorn 2002, 31; Gill 2003a, 62).

The role of individuals in social change in Gramscian approach coincides with yet another discursive institutionalist conceptualization. Namely, Schmidt (like Gramsci) envisaged the strategic action of individuals and conceptualized this as the agents' *foreground discursive abilities* in combination with the background ideational abilities (Schmidt 2008, 314). Thus, these abilities underpin the agency in the dynamic equilibrium of institutions. They are used in changing or maintaining institutions and conveying idea through discourse and thereby contributing to maintaining the equilibrium or bringing up the change. In addition to the

background ideational abilities (that explain the internal process of creating and maintaining the institutions), the foreground discursive abilities make the actors follow the logic of communication which enables them to think and act outside their institutions (dissociated from the institutional constrain) even if they are inside them. In Habermasian sense, this corresponds with the notion of communicative action (Schmidt 2008, 315). Through their foreground discursive abilities people reason, deliberate, debate and persuade to change or maintain the structures and rules they use (Schmidt 2008, 314).

In discursive institutionalism, the individuals are oriented normatively towards their environments, which makes ideas matter. The desires, preferences, motivations are not only a contextually given fact (reflecting the material or social circumstance), but are irredeemably ideational, reflecting the normative orientation towards the context where they are realized (Hay 2008, 63). The actors are thus able to take distance from their destiny - they become agents of change.

Foreground discursive abilities gain higher importance (and more manoeuvring ground) in a period when established social institutions become outdated, show their weaknesses, ineffective and inefficient nature. In such periods the political struggle over institutions intensifies and the outcome of such struggle cannot be sufficiently accounted for in the old institutional framework. The actors strengthen their role of sentient agents and act out of the fixed structures (institutions) and path dependence (Blyth 2011). However the timing and the causality of these larger paradigm shifts are difficult to determine and represent also a challenge for the discursive institutionalist analytical framework (Schmidt 2011, 55).

The role of agency and ideas in the period of uncertainty emerged as important in this study as well. The period in which the European processes in higher education take place can be considered as a period of uncertainty in higher education as it was exposed to many exogenous (political pressures) and endogenous (massification, mushrooming of institutions…) processes. This opened up the manoeuvring space for agency and actors with their abilities and brought higher education high up on the agenda of the policymakers and broader political community of interested actors at the European level. In this context, new problem definitions and policy solutions found their domicile in the international/regional policy arena.

The logic of communication and the foreground discursive abilities are concepts that contribute to interpreting the strategic aspect of action and change. Without discourse understood as exchange of ideas, it is very difficult to understand how ideas travel from individual thought to

collective action. Action is constituted by articulation, discussion, deliberation, and legitimization of actors' (cognitive or normative) ideas about action (Schmidt 2010, 16). What discursive institutionalism tries to grasp with the subjective ideational realm and the pertaining social action can be interpreted as greatly analogue to what Gramscian critical theory perspective views as the role of intellectuals in breaking the hegemonic discourse and thus trigger the process of reconfiguration of social forces (Gramsci 2000, 310). The Gramscian concept of *organic intellectual* will however not be employed for the purpose of this study. Discursive institutionalism offers adequate and sufficient explanation of action, change and agency.

When dealing with foreground discursive abilities it is difficult to avoid the issue of power. Power relations emerge especially when taking into account the actors' unequal access to strategic resources, knowledge of the political setting they operate in. This causes the asymmetry of power in agency and significantly affects the ability of actors to transform the context (Hay 2011, 69). Understanding why some ideas have/had more momentum than the others necessitated a broader conceptualization of the social forces and relations of power behind the European integration. The issue of power was one of the reasons to couple discursive institutionalism with Gramscian historicist approach (see Chapter 2.5).

The institutional background and the preconditioning of the agents can be interpreted by the use of older three new institutionalisms, whereas the considerable advantage of discursive institutionalism comes to the front in the analyses and interpretation of political processes and interaction (arguing, bargaining, negotiating, coordinating, deliberating …). In fact in my study the concept of logic of communication and the agent's abilities contributed to interpreting the dynamic nature of European higher education policy processes, particularly where the contending ideational streams proved the structural (institutional) explanation insufficient. Thus the agents' abilities and the logic of communication come to surface when communicative action is taking place and in particular when there is a period of instability or crises. But before introducing the complementary analytical approach to discursive institutionalism I briefly dealt with the notion of interests. An often used term when interpreting the course of action and choices of actors (collective and individual) has also its place in the discursive institutionalism.

Interest and ideas

At the bottom of the dissection of discursive institutionalism, I found room for a brief discussion about the notion of interests - a notion that is so often present in explaining social and political

world and is also present in the institutionalist traditions. It was not my intention to write about theories and approaches that I scraped up from the analytical arsenal. However I felt somehow compelled to dedicate a few lines to the case of rational choice and interests. If not for other reasons, for the misleading effect that, in my opinion, they cause in the contemporary social scholarship.

The notion of interests can be found in many versions of liberal theories, especially by explaining the political processes. For example liberal intergovernmentalist approach in international relations loosened the realistic theory dominance of explaining international politics by bringing into analysis the dynamics of interests and interest groups/actors on national level who make alliances and fronts based on rational considerations (Apeldoorn 2002, 39). Another example (closer to my analytical choice) is the use of interest in one of the three new institutionalisms extensively referred to above. Namely, the rational choice and the logic of consequence represent the major institutional background determining the social dynamics in the *rational choice institutionalism* (Schmidt 2010). In my research the use of rational choice and the concept of interest did not prove adequate to interpret the findings.

In discursive institutionalism the conceptualization of interests and their interplay with ideas is closely related to the foreground discursive and background ideational abilities. As stated elsewhere in this Chapter both structure and agency matter, depending on the other methods and complementary approaches that are added to the core one. I work with discursive institutionalism informed by structure oriented theories, therefore in my analysis the actors are sentient agents using their abilities, but at the same time their structure-induced behaviour is not entirely excluded.

The discussion about interests is perhaps among the most ambiguous issues to broach when presenting the ideational analysis. It emerges especially with regard to the role of various actors in the Bologna Process and when analysing the developments in the EU involvement in higher education. The temptation to explain the evolution of ideas with materially given interest and the logic of calculus (rational choice) is strong and compelling. Only extensive analyses and thorough interpretation of the data lead to the point where the material (structural) explanation is not sufficient. I argue throughout this dissertation from various angles that by reducing the interpretations to interest, one risks to simplify the social world to too many fixed parameters. I further argue that it is possible to correlate the (temporary) ideation of interest and the related policy ideas with the discursive institutionalism and connect those to wider institutional

background and material (economic conditions) with the use of historical materialism (see below).

In ideational analyses tradition the conceptualization of interests brings in the subjective element or better, the idealization of interests. Colin Hay (2011, 2008) explains the interests as idealized extrapolation of subjective preference. Interests do not exist but the constructions (ideas) of interests do. These are inherently normative and subjective/inter-subjective conceptions of what would bring advantage for a particular actor. Conceptions of self-interest provide a cognitive filter through which the actor orients her/himself towards his/her environment, providing means by which an actor evaluates the relative merits of conducting a potential course of action. These conceptions arise from ongoing interactions with context – but nevertheless they have autonomy from it. In other words, the conceptions reflect subjective/inter-subjective preferences regarding what the particular actor values. The conception of interest is thus always subjective, but yet different from desires. Namely, in the case of desire, an actor might acknowledge that something is not in his interest but still does it (Hay 2011, 79).

As social constructions, interests in politics are difficult to pursue. Actors play a significant role as sentient agents with their normative orientation towards their environment/context. They do so in a context that favours certain strategies over others and must rely on perceptions of that context that are, at best incomplete and that might often prove to have been inaccurate after the event (Hay 2011, 67). In this sense politics is less about pursuit of material interests. On the one hand, it is more about the fashioning, identification, and rendering actionable of such conceptions, and on the other, about the balancing of presumed instrumentality and rather more affective motivations (Hay 2008, 64). This goes along with the above-explained approach used in this study whereby the actors appear both as analytically non-substitutable (unique), and yet simultaneously guided by structural background.

In order to bring more clarity in the conceptualizations of interests as ideas, Hay gives the example of the emergence of monetarism: It is not interesting how and why monetarism of late 70s and 80s is related to material interests of business, but rather how and why business came to conceive it as interest (Hay 2011, 80). Those responsible for corporate decision value profits, not because it is innately good or because it is structurally determined by their position in production, but because they are socialized in this way – to evaluate success in terms of profit (Hay 2011, 76).

Economism and deterministic interpretations of the Europeanisation of higher education

In the case of the Bologna Process it is compelling to explain (and often done so) the course of action as a struggle guided by materially given interests – often associated with business, leading social groups and owners of capital (e.g. Krašovec 2012). Such conceptualizations often rely on economically deterministic approach to social relations and processes. In this dissertation I tried to move beyond that perimeter. Perceptions of interests were considered subsidiary ideas to the dominant programmatic paradigms and pubic philosophies. The political action revealed a particular logic of communication that fostered the definition of problems (second level of ideas) and construction of interests. Hence, instead of limiting the analysis and interpretations to the material relations and pertaining interests of actors, I extended the enquiry to encompass other dimensions of social world, such as ideas and institutions. Thereby I tried to interpret the ideations of higher education, the contention between them and, not least - the structural (and institutional) context of which this ideation was an integral element. For this purpose (as announced on several occasions in the theoretical section of the dissertation) the discursive institutionalism necessitated a complementary theoretical input in order to make possible the interpretation of larger frameworks that are operating underneath the ideational rules and discursive regularities detected in the process of Europeanisation of higher education. In neo-Gramscian historicist school I found these missing elements that contributed to interpreting the background picture in which the recent Europeanisation of higher education took place.

2.5 Conceptualising the historical and structural context by extending discursive institutionalism with a critical theory

As already described above, some authors from the institutionalist tradition attributed to the discursive institutionalism weakness in accounting for larger social structures in which agency takes place (Bell 2011). The deficiency of discursive institutionalism identified during the course of this research project is linked to the fact that it does not provide for a clear connection between the dominance of some ideas, discourses and the underlying structures, neither does it account with precision for how some actors are discursively relegated outside the perimeter of decision-making activity in the policy arena (Radaelli and Schmidt 2004, 365).

The macro-political level, power and larger social and economic forces that inform social action are not the central topic of my enquiry but in the effort to interpret the dynamics concerning higher education in Europe they cannot be overlooked. Even though the emphasis might be on the logic of communication, political action, discourse and ideas, the ideational analysis shall not underestimate the inter-subjectively present (objective) environmental pressures or structural and institutional conditions (e.g. economic) toward the strategy (Parsons 2011, 135).

Ideationalists recognize that institutional change occurs in a context that is structured in complex and constantly changing ways, which facilitates certain forms of intervention while preventing some others. For instance, access to strategic resources, and indeed to the knowledge of institutional environment, is unevenly distributed. This, in turn, unequally affects the ability of actors to transform the context (institutional and otherwise) in which they are situated (Hay 201, 69). Schmidt (2008) also recognizes the role of the larger social structures and power relations, especially when it comes to the social construction of norms (p. 321), discursive abilities of agents (p.316), manipulative nature of discourse in favour of social elites (p. 312), and conceptualizing the third level of ideas (p.308). She admits difficulties in establishing criteria to grasp the latter (third level of ideas or public philosophies) and thereby hints at something that operates beyond the direct reach of sentient agents. These ideas are at a deeper level than others, and are often left unarticulated as background knowledge. On the same point Schmidt connects the third level of ideas to power relations and invokes macro theorists and philosophers like Gramsci and Foucault (Schmidt 2008, 308).

During the initial (exploring) phases of this research project I often lacked conceptual tools to interpret these larger ideational presences. This occurred especially in the field work and the analysis of the data. For this reason, I searched for the complementary analytical approach in the direction indicated by Schmidt.

Informing discursive institutional analysis with historicist (critical) approach

In an attempt to outline the social and political aspects of the macro historical context in which agency takes place, I informed the discursive ideational approach with the neo-Gramscian version of historical materialism (Cox 1981; Cox 1999; Cox 2005; Apeldoorn 2002; Bieler 2002; Gill 2003a; Gill 2003b). This study addresses higher education policy processes on the European level. One of the basic questions at the inception of this study was why higher education as a policy sector passed so decisively to the European level of governance and policy coordination (despite the fact that this process avoided the hard law). The field research in all

its stages confirmed the relevance of this question. In order to bite into this challenge I needed to explore, interpret and understand the context in terms of social relations, ideas and institutions to ascertain the relevance and conceptualise the context for discourses and ideas that are generated on the regional (cross-border) level, as well as the meaning of higher education that emerges from that. (Neo)Gramscian approach offers the above mentioned conceptual toolbox. It offers the explanatory capacity to account for the larger ideational systems accompanying the shifts of governance from national to international, transnational and regional levels.

Even though often in a reductionist fashion labelled as a Marxist theory, according to many scholars Antonio Gramsci developed one of the most far reaching revisions of what can be referred to as Marxist thought of the 20th century[5] (Germain and Kenny 1998, 5). In the decades following his death in 1937, his writings have been to a great extent forgotten or kept away from the spotlight. With the changing winds in the Soviet block after Stalin's death, the publications and translations increased and spread his writings worldwide. Namely the relatively long hibernation can be attributed also to the heterodoxy of Gramsci's thought in comparison to the dominant streams of Marxism and the pertaining state doctrines of the time. Gramsci undoubtedly reached a high level of prominence in the 1970s and 1980s across Western Europe, but also worldwide. The appreciation of his writings came especially from the thinkers and authors interested in political action. His international influence has penetrated beyond the left, and indeed beyond the sphere of instrumental politics (Hobsbawm 2000, 13).

Relevant to this study, Gramsci's theoretical work has been "revitalised" by scholars for whom it provided an ontological and epistemological foundation upon which to construct a non-deterministic (yet structurally grounded) explanation of change. By insisting on transformative capacity of human beings, Gramsci's radical embrace of human subjectivity provides the political science scholars with one way of avoiding a deterministic and ahistorical structuralism (Germain and Kenny 1998, 5). Furthermore, Gramsci was greatly sensitive to the specifics of the given moment. In fact one of the reasons why non-Marxist scholars too, have found Gramsci so rewarding is precisely his refusal to leave the terrain of concrete historical, social and cultural realities for abstraction and reductionist theoretical models (Hobsbawm 2000, 12).

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[5] It is perhaps reductionist also to talk about Marxist thought in singular considering the wide variety of its nuances, versions and sequels.

Social forces, historical structures as framework for action

Historical materialist explanation of society is based on the analysis of production relations, social relations, dialectic of different sets of social forces and the social origins of power. All these elements constitute the historical structures representing framework for action. Historical structures are underpinned by a particular configuration of dialectically intertwined sets of social forces related to modes of production. In a heuristic attempt to interpret this complex social reality, the sets of social forces underpinning the historical structures are categorised in three sets (dimensions)[6]: 1. Material conditions, 2. Ideas, and 3. Institutions (Cox 1981, 136; Cox 2005, 40; Apeldoorn 2002, 20).

Material conditions/capabilities (**1**) in the presented archetype triangle of social forces are the economic element of Gramscian conceptualisation of the historical structure. Material conditions include both the social relations and the physical means of production (Cox 2005, 40). In a broader sense they stand for the resources, technological and organisational capabilities in society, economic situation of individuals and groups and similar materially originating variables. These economically embedded conditions significantly determine the position of a group in social world in terms of power relations (Cox 1981, 136).

Unlike the more orthodox Marxist schools of thought, the (neo) Gramscian authors took over also other sets of social forces as constitutive elements of the historical structure. The most dynamic and closely related to agency are the *ideas* (**2**). These are continuously running through the fabric of a given society in various forms such as political, ideological, ethical, etc. In considering ideas as an important structural construct and constraint, the (neo) Gramscian school can be compared to ideational analysis and thereby to discursive institutionalism. The ideas as part of framework for action match with the third level ideas in discursive institutionalism. They consist of inter-subjective meanings, or those shared notions of the nature of social relations which tend to perpetuate habits and patterns of behaviours and constitute the common ground for prevailing social discourses. Ideas are also collective images of social order that form the view of the legitimacy of power relations, prevailing imaginaries of justice, public good, etc. (Cox 1981, 136).

Both to the ideational analysis and neo-Gramscian historical materialism it is possible to attribute the focus on the inter-subjective making of social reality where we can also find the

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[6] These ideal types shall serve more as a heuristic device than categories with the predetermined hierarchy of relationships.

role of ideas and discourses. Ideas can neither be simply reduced to interests nor be reified as existing prior to practice. It is only by human activity that ideas are generated, but this activity takes place within the boundaries of structural conditions (including those of material nature). However, the latter are also subject to change propelled by the reconfiguration of social forces where ideas can play a decisive role (Apeldoorn 2002, 14).

Material conditions are closely bound to ideas - they are mutually influencing one another and therefore are analytically and conceptually juxtaposed. Ideas are by no means subordinated to material conditions and economic relations. They coexist as a separate, but yet interwoven set of social forces. It would be reductionist to subdue the complexity of political, policy and ideological spheres to the economic sphere and material explanation (Cox 2005, 40).

Whereas the institutionalist tradition views the social world mainly through institutional constrains (Schmidt 2010), the *institutions* **(3)** in neo-Gramscian historical approach are viewed as only one of the three dimensions of social forces constituting the framework for action in which the agency is constrained. As opposed to the more dynamic nature of ideas, institutions and institutional practices represent the more static element in the configuration of social forces. They are conceptualised as means of stabilizing and perpetuating a particular order, reflecting the power relations of their time and location (Cox 1981, 136).

Institutions work as neutralizers of internal conflicts to the point where the structure stabilizes. The neo-Gramscian notion of institutionalisation and stability is comparable to how the ideational analysis explains the dynamics in the social world. In ideationalist view the stable equilibrium is the period succeeding deep-cutting changes when rival ideas are institutionalised and replacing the old institutions (Blyth 2008). While for neo-Gramscians the institutions initially tend to encourage collective images consistent with these power relations and eventually -take on a life of their own, exposed to challenges and changes (Cox 1981, 137). In periods of instability the room for agency expands, whereas in the periods of equilibrium it diminishes.

Institutionalisation of ideas, hegemony and hegemonic ideology

The institutionalisation of ideas and stability (equilibrium) of the structure are closely related to the Gramscian concept of *hegemony*. A concrete configuration of social forces whose rule is underpinned by an organic and stable fit between material conditions, ideas and institutions constitutes a *historic bloc* which is essential in building *hegemonic order* (Gramsci 2000, 193).

The foundations of hegemony lay in the unequal relations between social groups and the deriving relations of power. This however does not mean that the equilibrium is based on explicit conflict and coercive domination. The stronger social groups dominate the structure, but the subordinate groups accept the prevailing power relations as legitimate. In other words the equilibrium occurs when the weak perceive the dominant order as general and not only particular interest of the dominant groups. Hence, hegemony is the rule of consent. The mechanisms of force and coercion are not used, but are always at hand for the powerful to be used in case of necessity to safeguard the hegemonic order (Gramsci 2000).

A fusion of ideas, institutions and power brings about the *hegemonic ideology* and the pertaining discourse. However the ideological discourse is also closely linked to agency, i.e. it is dependent upon human practice for its reproduction or transformation (Apeldoorn 2002, 19). The hegemonic ideology assumes the task of unifying and cementing the historical bloc on which the rule of consent rests (Gramsci 2000, 193). The hegemonic ideology is formed through the articulation of initially diverse ideological elements into a single ideological discourse, which is then the expression of a hegemonic world view inasmuch as it transcends the narrow interests of the leading social group. Besides presenting the ideas and perceived interest of the dominant social groups as general interest, it genuinely incorporates opposing interests (perceived interests of subordinate groups) into its discourse, although in such manner that they are subordinated to the hegemonic social group (Apeldoorn 2002, 20).

The hegemonic ideology can also be described through cultural or semiotic foundations of social world and linked to the constructing the dominant (economic) imaginaries coupled with hegemonic order of discourse which in turn condition political and economic realities and underpin the theoretical and policy paradigms (Jessop 2008, 15-21). This conceptualisation finds parallels in the discursive institutionalist concepts of second and especially third level ideas (Chapter 2.4), denominated public philosophies (Schmidt 2008) or zeitgeist (Mehta 2010). Common for the third level of ideas is that they are difficult to detect, single out, define and trace a change (Schmidt 2008, 308). This study nevertheless extended the analytical discursive institutionalism frame with a critical approach precisely because of the attempt to account for the third level of ideas. It would namely be somehow reductionist to leave the larger social and political backdrop to the Europeanisation of higher education out of consideration.

The use of neo–Gramscian approach in conjunction with Schmidt's discursive institutionalism contributed also to interpreting and understanding why some ideas are stronger and more

persistent then others and why they are prone to normalisation and institutionalisation (see Chapter 2.3.4.). The latter two phenomena appear often throughout the study and represent important element of interpretation.

Institutions in the form of norms especially, but also historical path and perceived interests, support the hegemonic ideology. Institutionalising ideas is essential in the process of making them part of hegemonic order. They may become the anchor for the hegemonic strategy as they lend themselves both to the representations of diverse interests and to the universalization of policy. However, as Cox reminds (1981, 137), one must avoid excessive focus on institutions not to obscure either changes in the relationship of material forces (social relations) or the emergence of ideational challenge to a prevailing order. Ideas, institutions and material conditions are always organically interwoven in forming the historical structure – constructed by and constraining the agency.

Constructivist twist in the Gramscian approach and the relationship between agency and structure

The neo-Gramscian version of critical theory made a clear cut with the deterministic schools, economism and structuralist traditions by following Gramscian view of fluid structures, changeable through history. Society itself is not a parameter but a variable. There is no such thing as a fixed and universal human nature determining the rules and laws of social world. Both individuals and society are changing continuously through time. The changes are explained to a substantial degree as mediated through individual and collective human activity (Germain and Kenny 1998, 9). Departing from this Gramsci's non-deterministic explanation of society and change (embedded in the transformative capacity of the agents and drawing substantially from constructivist grounds) Apeldoorn (2002) allows for the understanding of relationship between structure and agency, which refuses to ontologically prioritise neither one nor the other. Instead it attempts to transcend the dichotomy of free will individuals on the one hand, and deterministic structuralism on the other, acknowledging that social structures are constructed by real people and mediated by their consciousness and praxis – but also that the exercise of such autonomous agency is at the same time dependent upon prior social forms (Apeldoorn 2002, 15). The dialectic between different sets of social forces underlying the hegemonic order is involving agency and structure (Gill 2003a, 50). In the same fashion Cox (1981, 144) warns about the interwoven complexity between social forces and agency by calling for the observation of the principle of dialectic in the historic dynamism between agency and

structures. Actors alone do not define the system as a structure. Actions are shaped either directly by pressures projected through the system or indirectly by the subjective awareness of the (part of) actors about the constraints imposed by the system (which can be compared with the *background ideational abilities* in Schmidt's conceptualisation). The actors can be dominant elements in the system, but the system as structure is more than their sum. On the other hand the power and coherence of the structure should not be overemphasised. Even if it is very dominant it is still subject to agents' activity, change and replacement with another structure (Cox 1981, 144).

Gramscian thought recognized the efficacy of ethical and cultural sources of political action (Cox 1981, 134). Taking into consideration the dynamic relationship among political, ethical, ideological and economic spheres of activity, the Gramscian approach avoids reducing the explanation to economics like many versions of more orthodox Marxist economisms, if one indulges in talking of such category (Cox 2005, 40). Gramsci himself saw the *organic* – a world based on economic relations and relatively enduring structures – juxtaposed to *conjunctural* – specific to a given moment that can open opportunity for agency and change (Gramsci 2000). The school of thought based on Gramsci's work views the equilibrium in social world as the culmination of a historically-specific configuration of social forces i.e. the mutually constitutive relationship between ideas, institutions and material conditions that forms a historical structure – a framework which in turn shapes the action (Cox 1981, 136). This provides the scholars with a way of avoiding deterministic and ahistorical pondering of structures (Germain and Kenny 1998, 5). However, remaining loyal to a certain degree of structural explanation of social change also prevents the overemphasizing of ideas in interpreting the social world. As such it can serve as sort of a backdrop – a counterbalancing analytical complement to more dynamic view on institutions.

The constructivist dimension of dual nature of structures and unfixing/historicizing the institutions is well in accordance with the attempt of discursive institutionalists to loosen the stickiness of institutions by bringing into consideration the agency (in their case through the logic of communication) in interpreting social world and change in it (Schmidt 2008, 313). However, both Gramsci and neo-Gramscian scholars envisage larger historical structures as constraining and representing the limits of "possible" in which the change occurs (Germain and Kenny 1998, 10).

Within the conceptualisation of agency, the intellectuals play the key role in building a historic bloc and represent the actors that are organically connected to a social group. They perform the function of developing and sustaining the mental images, technologies and organisations which bind together the members of a social group and members of a historic bloc into a common identity (Cox 2005, 40). The role played by *organic intellectuals* in the (neo)Gramscian scholarship is close to the role attributed to actors in discursive institutionalism through the concept of foreground discursive abilities and partly also background ideational abilities, whereby individuals, groups and organisations contribute to change with their abilities to think out of the perimeter set by the institutions (Schmidt 2008, 316; Schmidt 2010, 16). In this study I relied on the discursive institutionalism to interpret the agency, and only seldom referred to the Gramsci's concept of organic intellectual.

The diffused nature of power and civil society

The consensual nature of hegemonic order means also that the power is not concentrated at the top. Hegemony in other words is the rule of consent whereby the leading social groups co-opt the subordinated social groups by incorporating their idea of interest in the hegemonic ideational and discursive practice (Apeldoorn 2002, 20). There is no top-down domination, but a stable configuration of social forces forming a historic block. The stability of hegemonic order is thus anchored in the entire structure of society.

Similar conceptualisation of power was elaborated in detail by Michel Foucault (1998) according to whom the power is not a top down phenomenon. Instead, it is exercised from innumerable points in the interplay of non-egalitarian and fluid relations. There is no position of antagonism between the ruler and the ruled at the root of power relations. Power is produced from one moment to the next, everywhere in the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions (Foucault 1998, 93).

In the fashion of Foucault and some other linguistic and structuralist schools of thought the discourse is closely linked to power which is to be considered when analysing texts. The vascular nature of power creates the difficulty of spotting the origins of discourses and ideas. Some ideas become stronger than others; the discourse that justifies and normalises them gains momentum in the political arenas. In Schmidt's (2008) terms, the policy solutions of cognitive nature slowly acquire the normative tone and along this process acquire legitimacy and gain strength.

Similarly to Foucault the neo-Gramscian theory also sees hegemony resting on the consent of the non-ruling social groups. The power is held up from the bottom through the ideational and institutional forces unifying the divergent views into a single hegemonic discourse (Apeldoorn 2002, 30). This can be connected to the discursive institutionalist account on institutions. In Schmidt's (2008) terms, both problem definitions and larger public philosophies represent the institutional context in which action takes place, but also constructs with which actors operate. It is a futile exercise to track down the location where strategies are created and it is not possible to identify the social group that is dominating. But yet the logic can be perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, nevertheless it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them and few who can be said to have formulated them (Foucault 1998, 93).

The analysed political action and discursive venues are part of a larger historical/contextual dynamics. The exiting hegemonic order can be characterised by the post-World-War II institutional setting of the liberal democratic western world underpinned by the idea of welfare state and Keynesian economic doctrine. The recent institutional and ideational shifts can be interpreted as the ones giving rise to a new type of society premised upon self-help and individualism where aspiration and ambition drives the consent and endures the historical structure. The vast but fragmented "middle class" allows a fragile dominance of economic elite and thereby supports a supremacists (not hegemonic) order until a coherent form of opposition emerges (Gill 2003a, 65). It is precisely there where one can look for the sources of stability of the heterogeneous (postmodern) European societies and it is there where one can find the dispersed nature of power of modern Europe.

The power of this hegemony is interesting also from another perspective: the nexus between power and knowledge. Throughout history it is possible to observe the relationship between higher education and power, albeit changing with the hegemonic order of the time (Zgaga 2007, 83). The ideas, when confronted are accompanied by strong discourses and leaning on several institutional backgrounds in seeking legitimacy. Knowledge and technology coupled with the *discourse of performance* represent a strong source of legitimacy (Lyotard 1984). This struggle can be discerned from the discursive interaction. In the analysed communicative action the discursive differences are negotiated; they are governed by the difference in power. Therefore the discursive venues are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of different discourses, actors and ideas contending and struggling for influence (Wodak 2001). This adds to the complexity characterising the question of the origin and hierarchy of ideas, also in the case of higher education in Europe. It is possible to detect the arena of interaction (contending) of

various discourses/ideas on higher education, the venues where these discourses were formulated and epistemic communities or individuals who brought forward the ideas, but it takes wider theoretical considerations in order to understand where some ideas come from, why they persist and why are they stronger than others.

The political power of the ruling social groups is thus far from dependant on coercive apparatus of the state. The hegemonic order is maintained by the power diffused in the myriad of institutions and relationships in the *civil society*. Civil society is in fact another key concept in Gramscian theory – together with the coercive apparatus of the political society it forms the equation "civil society + political society = state" (Gramsci 2005, 32). It is the realm in which the existing social order is grounded and where the strength of structural equilibrium (hegemony) rests. Civil society is actually constructed around a stable hegemonic social order and keeps it running by perpetuating the hegemonic ideology. The institutions and organisations in civil society are the nest of ideas, discourses, institutional practice and agency which is essential in maintaining hegemony (Cox 1999, 4; Gill 2003a, 65). Besides upholding the historical structures and hegemonic order, the civil society is also an arena for the germination of counter-hegemony that might undermine or even thwart the existing equilibrium and potentially jeopardise the hegemony (Cox 1999, 7).

Like Foucault, Lyotard also pondered the nexus between power and knowledge. The normalisation of cognitive ideas as used by Schmidt (2008) in discursive institutionalism (described above) can be addressed also from the perspective of the discourse of legitimation so well conceptualised by Lyotard (1984). 'Reality' is what provides the evidence used as proof in scientific argumentation, as well as prescriptions of a juridical, ethical and political nature (Lyotard 1984, 47). Inspired by Lyotard, one can venture into the claim that by mastering 'reality', one can master normative and also cognitive ideas and the interactive process of discourse. That is, according to Lyotard, what technology can do (ibid.). Therefore by reinforcing technology one reinforces reality and thereby the alignment of the ideas and discourses to the common sense, norms, values and generally accepted beliefs. The circle is closed with reciprocity, whereby technology is reinforced all the more effectively if one has access to scientific knowledge and decision-making authority.

Beyond the nation-state: Internationalisation/transnationalisation of social and economic relations

Instead of overemphasising the economic factors and reducing everything to technological and material interests (thus different from the bulk of Marxist approaches), the Gramscian approach recognises the efficacy of ethical and cultural sources of political action (Cox 1981, 134). Gramsci recognised the national social/cultural formations (nation states) as the basic units from which most of the Gramscian basic concepts arise (Gramsci 2000, 189).

One of the most distinctive innovative contributions of neo-Gramscian scholars from the 1980s onwards lies in extending the Gramscian conceptualisations of social relations, historical structures power, hegemony and civil society to the international and global social space (Cox 1981; Cox 1999; Cox 2005; Apeldoorn 2002; Gill 2003a; Bieler 2002). They depart from the cross-border economic activity linked with other dimensions of cross-border activities and bring up new structures engendering particular forms of transnational agency (Apeldoorn 2002, 32). The currents of internationalisation and globalisation represent the situation of uncertainty and open manoeuvring space to the discourses and ideas to surface as a powerful lever of change. The dominant social forces are viewed in a process of gradual internationalisation/transnationalisation while intertwining with the private and public international institutions that foster practices (Germain and Kenney 1998, 7).

Internationalisation of the state is closely connected to the progressive globalisation of economic activity (production). The expansion of the international production is reflected in new international division of labour, more integrated national economies, and adaptation of enterprises to international markets of goods, services and labour. The changes in economic activity are accompanied by a complex of international social relationships which connect the social groups of the different countries. Consequently there has been a gradual formation of transnational actors, pressure groups and, not least, the formation of transnational social elites (Cox 1981, 146).

The process of change of production relations and reorganisation of material conditions opened up the national boundaries to the new configuration of social forces leading to the transformation of historical structure. The transforming framework of action includes shifts in ideas, formation of new dominant ideologies and emergence of institutions supporting the change of the hegemonic order. Emerging hegemony is describable as a social structure, an economic structure, and a political structure and is further expressed in universal norms,

institutions and mechanisms which lay down general rules of behaviour for states and for those forces of civil society that act across national boundaries (Cox 2006, 44).

Hegemony at the international level is thus not merely an order among the states. The new order diminishes the role of the state and brings up a multiple layer authority. The territorial distances of national economies and societies is penetrated by transnational forces – a nascent transnational historic bloc in the structure of transnational governance where there is no central legal or coercive institution, but nevertheless the power is there (Cox 1999, 12).

Internationalising civil society and international/supranational organisations

Along with the internationalisation of the state, civil society also transforms into a transnational category. It hosts the actors, i.e. autonomous social groups subscribing to both a bottom-up resistance to the re-configuration of social forces (drawing from the outgoing ideas and institutions) and the derivate institutions and ideologies as well as the top-down co-opted organisations and actors who support the emerging new order and pertaining institutions and ideas (Cox 1999, 10,11).

International organisations and regimes are one of the most powerful mechanisms through which normalisation and thus institutionalisation of ideas in the creation of transitional hegemony occurs (Cox 1999; Apeldoorn 2002; Gill 2003a). Indeed, international organisations function as the process through which the institutions of hegemony and its ideology are developed. They embody the rules that facilitate the expansion of hegemonic order; they are themselves the product of hegemony; they ideologically legitimate the norms of hegemonic order; they co-opt the elites from the nation states, particularly from the peripheral countries and they absorb the counter-hegemonic ideas (Cox 2005, 44). In practice, this takes the form of policy recommendations, setting benchmarks, reviewing policies, defining problems and proposing policy solutions, organising the coercive apparatus (defence system), representing labour and industry, organising trade regimes etc. (Cox 1981, 145; Cox 2005 45).

In this dissertation the transnational shift of social forces and the pertaining hegemonic order was encountered in the analysis of the EU role in higher education. The EU is viewed as the emerging transnational formation that has been going through a major ideational, normative and institutional shift from a welfare-liberal model of state to new constitutional formations based on the idea of market supremacy with pertaining institutional and regulatory settings (Gill 2003a). The evolution leading from initial *international* hegemonic bloc towards *transnational*

formations and pertaining historical structures was accompanied by the political/regulatory model of corporate governance and the deregulation of the system and reconfiguration of civil society. The latter spilled over the borders thereby fuelling the formation of market civilisation premised upon commodified desire as a means to generate consent (Gill 2003a, 54).

Supranational hegemonic order, the EU and the *new constitutionalism*

These transformations were intertwined with the reconfiguration of state forms and gradual transfer of competences to the EU institutions thereby alienating the decisions from the democratic mechanisms. To denominate this process Gill (2003, 66) employed the term *new constitutionalism*. In neo-Gramscian fashion, he accounted for the strengthening of a limited but powerful silhouette of a state-like construct above the actual states, increasingly insulated from popular-democratic accountability and based on a set of rules and regulations (both in the form of binding legal acts and in the form of soft regulation). It gradually evolves into a direct governance regime/structure that cannot be overridden by the national authorities. In fact one of the effects of new constitutionalism is preventing the governments from undoing the advancement of deregulated market model, free trade, and entrepreneurial initiative. These can be implemented in transnationalised formations such as the EU and WTO.

Other theories of international relations also provide an analytical capacity for conceptualisation the levels of governance that partly override the sovereignty of (nation) states. For example, according the *institutionalist* approach to international organisations and regimes, these cannot function entirely subdued to the national authorities that established them, since at some point they start to develop a 'mind' of their own, once given the competence (Martens and Wolf 2009). The neo-Gramscian approach instead, transcends the dichotomy between national and transnational and thereby better accounting for power and differences between social groups.

In discursive institutionalism terms this process would be conceptualised as the normalisation of cognitive ideas: The once cognitive idea on market supremacy becomes a general norm or value – a principle upon which the European integration is built. The logic of communication changes and hence the power of idea increases. From a policy solution based in the argument of necessity or consequence, it shifts to an idea justified with the argument of appropriateness. Gradually it becomes a category above the political decisions and policy process – it becomes a constitutional category.

Thus, the principles and practices of new constitutionalism in the EU integration offer the ground for a new form of state aligned with the formation of the new transnational historic bloc. The nascent transnational (European) civil society is characterised by the enlarged, fragmented and individualised "middle class" and increasingly commodified institutions (including public ones such as universities). The progressive shift of the governing (and legal) instruments/mechanisms to Brussels (formal and notably informal), the market supremacy based (de)regulation and the corporate governance models indicate the strengthening of the transnational (European) political society. All this is hinting at the silhouette of the nascent but yet only conditionally stable neo-Gramscian (transnational) state (Gill 2003a, 66).

3. The research design and methods

3.1 The course of the research

The idea for the research topic was not created at once. Accordingly, the research questions, the research plan, the analytical framework and the methods were also gradually developed. I constructed the analytical framework progressively around the research matter in accordance with the need to account for the findings that emerged in the course of the research.

The course of research was divided into three stages. In the first stage I started with a very general research question and set out to explore the Bologna Process as the most visible and geographically inclusive arena of higher education policy on the regional level. I engaged in data collection, mainly from various web sources, performed preliminary interviews and talks with various actors and carried out desk research. I interpreted the collected data and proposed the first conceptual categories. The interpretations and conceptualizations from this early stage served as guidelines for defining the main research interest, formulating more concrete research questions and choosing the analytical framework/approach. The inductive method used in the first stage was inspired by some basic principles of the Charmaz (1990) technique (see below). I did not consider this as fully fledged theories and made use of it as just auxiliary technique to help me complete the first stage of exploration. It was however not used as proper

methodological instrument. As a result of the first stage I found *discursive institutionalism* (Schmidt 2008) the most appropriate approach for the continuation of my research project

In the second stage, I passed from *exploring* (inductive method) and singling out (*interpreting*) the ideations of higher education in the European political/arena to *interpreting, understanding* or *explaining* (deductive method) what these ideations are about and what they tell us about the meaning of higher education in the larger picture of international/regional social relations, power and structural background. However, due to the extensiveness of the second wave of fieldwork and data collection, the inductive method was still present, especially in the analysis/interpretation of the interviews. Therefore from this stage on, the study was moving back and forth between the chosen theory-blend and the interpretation of the data. In terms of data collection, I carried out the visits, interviews, collected the correspondence, policy and political documents, observed the meetings, working groups, summits, etc. and let the categories materialize during the analyses of the so collected material data.

Theorising about the findings and the collected data was the crucial step in generating new knowledge. The choice of theoretical premises and the construction/adjustment of the analytical framework was a constant work in progress and was completed only when the field research and analysis was already going on. Thereby I kept my approach open to potential new elements that kept emerging. However, in the second stage the discursive institutionalism was intensively present in the research including its substantial influence on data collection. Later in analysing and interpreting these data I already used a wide range of concepts from discursive institutionalism. Discursive institutionalism was gradually enthroned as the guiding conceptual framework through which the analyses and interpretation were conducted.

The second stage resulted in advanced interpretations and complex conceptualizations. However there were some holes in the proposed arguments and interpretations. Namely, while the micro level of the political process was covered, some of the initial questions and the questions that emerged during research related to the broader social context remained without a sufficient response. At this stage it was necessary to further adjust and construct the analytical framework around the research matter in an attempt to account for the issues that emerged during the course of the research.

In order to provide sufficient explanatory momentum for the findings, there was a need to consider background changes and structural equilibrium dynamics. In Cox's words, I dedicated my research endeavour to the search for the *whole of which particular problems are just initially*

contemplated component in the attempt to understand the processes of change in which both parts and whole are involved (Cox 1981, 129).

3.2 Data collection

The data collection and analysis were designed as an exercise of exploring the European arena of higher education policy processes, discourses and ideas. I explored the theatres where ideas and discourses meet, where the actors confront, negotiate and bargain. I engaged in numerous conversations and interviews with the involved actors and explored venues where ideas and discourses are generated, articulated, coordinated, communicated, perpetuated, etc. The European-level policy processes left behind a substantial set of documents which constituted essential share of data. The prevailing genres among these policy documents were: declarations, communiqués, communications, policy papers, seminar conclusions, policy guidelines, expertise papers. Over a span of three years, I also performed 26 unstructured interviews and more than 20 talks with interlocutors that helped me interpret negotiation, deliberation, communication, and bargaining among other processes and decision-making maze. This in turn eased tracing relevant documents and people and getting a better overview of the mechanisms and ways the decisions take place.

Bologna Process was dealt with directly in Chapters 4 and 7, and indirectly in Chapters 5 and 6. The process washed ashore nine documents at the ministerial level and a series of seminars conclusions, policy guidelines, correspondence between actors and other papers that offer a rich paper trail for the analysis. In addition, the process itself advanced with the entrance of new actors, evolving coordination technologies, a dynamic relationship between partners and other characteristics taken into account in the exploring phase of this study. The contingent events and the particular occurrences that significantly or meaningfully affected the coordination process were also examined and presented. The analysis of written texts was coupled with the analysis of the interviews, material from archives of the interviewees/informants, correspondence and governmental documents. These provided a rich source of text to be examined in order to derive conceptual categories and ideas from the detected discourses.

On the level of the EU (Chapter 8), the most intensive production of texts can be found in the offices of the European Commission. In addition to the strong policy messages sent out via the

policy documents (Communications), in the analyses of field data I paid attention to speeches, expert documents, correspondence, publications, etc. The interviews with the EU commission civil servants provided valuable insight into the discursive topics, arguments, argumentation lines, the type of discourse the nature and the level of ideas. The data collected through interviews were essential in developing conceptual categories by way of detecting the ideas and the relationship between them.

Besides the Commission, I also analysed the activity and the texts generated within and by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. I was interested in the relationship between the Commission and these two institutions of the EU, the sources of initiatives and the way the documents of these institutions come to existence. I interviewed civil servants in the European Parliament and responsible officers for higher education at the national representations to the EU in Brussels.

During the course of research, the European Court of Justice judgements in conjunction with the EU Commission activity on infringement procedures turned out valuable for further interpretations and conceptualisations (Chapter 9).

The Council of Europe has been considerably involved in discussions on higher education in the European arena. This inter-governmental organisation was especially interesting because of its role in the post-World War II normative and institutional setting in Europe. I analysed the texts, the events, the relationships with other actors and the positions taken in various politically relevant situations (Chapter 5).

To complete the map of the European-level higher education policy space, I put under scrutiny the non-governmental actors involved in the processes. I especially analysed the policy documents, seminars conclusions, press releases, speeches and interviews of the key people within the European Students' Union in regard to the concept of social dimension of higher education (Chapter 6). Both the Council of Europe and the European Students' Union host interconnected individuals forming the epistemic communities, operating on the international and transnational level. Analysing their activity and discourse, and tracing out the underlying ideas contributed to understanding the meaning attributed to higher education by civil society in the transnational and international sphere of activity.

In each chapter where the results of the data analysis are presented and engaged in building the argument, the data set will be explained again in more detail. The auxiliary methods that were used to analyse/interpret the data are presented in the following Chapter.

3.3 Interpreting the data

Although conceptualisation and theorisation were already applied in data interpretation, the process followed an analytical path whereby I observed and performed research in the field. Especially in the initial phases I worked on the field material using a technique inspired and informed by the techniques described by Cathy Charmaz (1990, 2006). The method presented in her book "Constructing Grounded Theory" (Charmaz 2006) belongs to the family of sociological constructivist approaches and consists of the conceptual interpretation of the data. Under this school, the researcher moves from emerging conceptualisations towards more general theoretical statements. In my case I did not seek to develop theory and thus did not follow the grounded theory as Charmaz's model prescribes. Instead I took it as an inspiration for the general course of the research. Namely the initial field work data lead me first to conceptualisation and to setting the course of research. At a later phase I constructed a blend of existing theoretical/analytical approaches on the ground of the emerging categories. Hence, I did not subscribe to a single analytical school, but selected two major ones in accordance with the arisen necessity and reworked them into two components of an integral (not eclectically fragmented) approach.

In the data analysis and interpretation I did not follow the principle of testing hypotheses derived from existing theories, thereby avoiding structuring the data collection and analyses towards the verification or rejection of such hypotheses. Instead, I checked, developed, changed, upgraded and refined the conceptualisations and the course of enquiry and did not limit myself to a preconceived hypothesis, nor was I loyal to the rigour of quantitative approaches in the sampling and testing. Conducting of the interviews and other data collection was adjusted while I was in the field and in accordance with the recurrent themes/issues in the data. In fact, what I observed in the field was crucial for the development of theoretical categories and the relationships between them. Rather than creating theoretical *tunnel vision* within a pre-constructed theoretical framework, I attempted to address the basic question of the norms, values and meaning. My aim was to detect the social settings, conditions, circumstances

and dominant ideas/discourses/rationalities that promote further theoretical sophistication in any theoretical school of thought or perspective.

I guided my field work with general research sub-questions within the frame of the thesis general questions such as: what are the main discourses dominating the texts; what are the main references, flag words, arguments and other discursive elements used; what are the connections between different interviewees and their organisations; how are the discourses and texts interrelated; what is the political, social, normative setting; who is saying what and in what circumstances; what are the alliances between actors; what are the underlying ideas and issues in higher education; what is their normative platform; what is the institutional background and what are the dominant political/economic rationales underpinning the policies and discourses in the organisations and policy arenas I visited. This replaced the more common methodological approach of adhering to a preconceived, precisely articulated and static hypothesis. The initially formulated questions were subject to change, to be replaced if found to be irrelevant. Leads and emerging discoveries from the collected data were crucial in steering the course of this enquiry and forming theoretical categories.

The analyses started as an exercise of translating the newly emerging terms to concepts – an extended process of constant comparison and continued questioning whereby the researcher creates the explication, organisation and presentation of the data (rather than discovering order within the data) (Charmaz 1990, 1168, 1169). In my case, I analysed texts of relevant policy and political documents; compared the accounts and issues brought up by the various interviewees; compared the interview data with the informants' accounts; contextualised the issues, discourses and ideas in the identity, purpose or position of the examined actor/organisation/office. This exercise was concluded by presenting a model of ideas and discourse in each particular case and interpreting the relationship between them in terms of levels of generality and their nature. This was repeated throughout the duration of the research which was instrumental in ascending to the larger ideational dynamics that marks higher education in modern Europe.

The steps of data collection that followed the early conceptualisations were less and less simply an accumulation of information and exploring. This marked the transition to the theorising phase. The range of relevant conceptual categories crystallised in the process of providing evidence of discursive/ideational regularities and hence the repeated appearance of concepts and categories and their relative status of relevance in the amassed data and individual

experiences (with the interviewees and informants). The flow of enquiry was thereby caught in a loose sequence between discovery and verification based on an inductive open-ended intuitive approach instead of the traditional logical-deductive verification of a hypothesis against existing theories. I allowed the core issues and problems to emerge in this way.

Part II

4. A European policy arena: interpretations, discourse, ideas and context of the Bologna Process[7]

4.1 The choice of Bologna Process for the introductory analysis

Throughout the recent European history, higher education has become increasingly present as a subject of cross-border co-operation and integration, especially via various European Commission projects and eventually the Bologna Process (Corbett 2005). The latter is indeed the most visible policy process substantially affecting the national reform of virtually all European higher education systems. For a researcher enquiring about the ideas on higher education in the contemporary European integration, a process like Bologna represents a potential "mine of clues" from which it is possible to discern and interpret the larger picture of change and continuity.

Part of the literature review in the first phase (Zgaga 2004; Zgaga 2007; Zgaga 2012; Gornitzka 2010; Gornitzka and Ravinet 2011; Ravinet 2005; Ravinet 2008; Olssen and Maassen 2007; Tomusk 2004; Fairclough and Wodak 2008) and the findings of the exploring (inductive) phase lead me to the conclusion that the Bologna Process represents a policy and political arena that

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[7] A significatnt part of this chapter was published in the course of PhD project in Miklavič (2013)

has hosted significant political and policy action. Perhaps the best formulation of the way Bologna Process was considered at the outset of this study is epitomised in the following words:

> *The Bologna Process has provided an agora – not a "philosophy", in particular not an all-round "philosophical school" […] Instead of preaching a single "philosophy", it has made it possible to formulate and confront ideas on higher education in Europe and worldwide* (Zgaga 2012, 31).

Thus, Bologna as agora – a venue of communicative interaction. Where the communicative and coordinative (inter)action is significant, it is possible to trace and examine the logic of communication, the discourse and the pertaining ideas. In such situations the discursive institutionalism becomes a meaningful analytical approach in explaining the continuity and change with the explanatory power of ideas and discourse (Schmidt 2008, 2010).

The Bologna Process was chosen as the starting point for this research, but at the same time it represents the source of data in the search for interpreting the ideations of higher education in contemporary Europe. As a political phenomenon it was considered the first and only pan-European political forum attempting to reach a broad consensus (or common denominator) on Higher Education reforms throughout the continent.

After the initial snapshot of the literature on the Bologna Process, this Chapter presents an overview of Bologna texts - a sort of scanning through the Bologna discourse in order to trace and group the main discursive regularities and ideational rules that have emerged throughout the communication and coordination of the higher education policy on the European level. Thereby the silhouettes of the main ideational streams and some concrete conceptual categories were identified to be elaborated in the further Chapters. The Bologna texts are analysed and presented in a chronological order in an attempt to shed light on the historical context (including the contingent events) and the longitudinal dynamics between the ideas that emerge (and disappear) in the Bologna political and policy arena. The findings presented in this Chapter also lead me to other political fora/arenas and institutional backgrounds that were taken into further analyses presented in other Chapters.

The material taken into consideration was gathered during the first period of field work and aiming at collecting the texts (documents and interviews) and interpreting the context in which the communicative action of the Bologna Process took place. In particular, I analysed the primary documents (declarations and communiqués), interviewed 20 people that participated

in the process, examined some secondary documents and took into consideration the material provided by the interviewees. Among these there were amendments to draft documents, intermediate (draft) versions of the documents, correspondence and similar. In order to understand the policy activity and the context of the coordinative discourse, I interviewed some key witnesses present behind the scenes and upon the drafting of these documents.[8]

In the process of analysing the collected material and interviews I focused on conceptual elements which constitute a discourse or indicate an ideational orientation. I considered discourse (in the discursive institutionalist fashion) as composed by subjective realm (substantive content of ideas) and inter-subjective realm (interactive process by which the ideas are conveyed). My main analytic and interpretative activity was dedicated to discerning the sets of discursive regularities and ideational rules, the particular meaning (institutional) context where they appeared and the logic of communication in the analysed political action.

4.2 The Bologna Process – a wide range of interpretations and critiques

Ever since its outset, the Bologna Process is subject to various interpretations, opinions, contestations and often also target of grassroots protests. It is clear that it is a complex phenomenon which has triggered reactions in various circles and sent out different, often conflicting, messages on the future of higher education in Europe. The multitude of interpretations also represents an inspiration for further and more detailed analysis of the Bologna Process.

The Bologna Process has a short prehistory in Sorbonne 1998 where ministers of the four biggest Western European countries gathered and set out the initiative. The enrolment into higher education in their countries dramatically exceeded the numbers of students from the post-World-War II period, but the system has not been reformed to (go along) follow the mass enrolment reality. Besides a number of other identified deficiencies in higher education, there was a notable drop in global interest for studying in Europe in comparison to e.g. USA (Zgaga

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[8] I also draw some conclusions from my direct involvement in the Bologna Process in the period between 2001 and 2007. I observed the process in the vests of representative of a stakeholder (ESIB), member of the delegation of a signatory state (Slovenia) and junior researcher (consecutively). Experiences with the process, conversations with influential actors, participation in the discussions and negotiations, access to the drafting process etc. represent an important insight into the dynamics of the Bologna Process. However, I avoided using personal account as a dominating source of the interpretation and conclusions.

2004, 25). The initiative of France, Germany, Italy and the UK paved the course to a (continent-wide) policy coordination in higher education in all the continent. The unprecedented power of the Bologna Process clearly indicated the will of the European governments to reform their higher education sectors (Froment 2006, Zgaga 2004).

The hype and relevance of the process attracted a wide range of interpretations. Some studies argued that the European (supranational and international) higher education policy coordination owes its success mainly to the tactics of creating a European leverage for domestic reforms in the policy areas where the resistance to changes is traditionally strong (Ravinet 2005). The normative ideas and institutional backgrounds can be a tough nut for the cognitive ideas on how to intervene and transform higher education. In accordance with neo-institutionalist approach, the governmental initiatives can result in organisational change when there is a normative match, i.e. congruence between the values and beliefs underlying a proposed reform/policy and the identity and traditions of the organisation (Gornitzka 1999, 10). Higher education is a constitutive institution of the cultural and historic institutional framework of Western society. Universities have played an important role in the creation of the nation state and acquired a special treatment as an institution of the nation state (see Chapter 10).Thus, the resistance to changes in higher education from general public and from various actors in civil society, are expectable. In such cases the European coordination of policies can come as a handy excuse for introduction of sensitive or controversial policies.

In the literature on the Bologna Process it is also possible to find quite conflicting views on its political character and ideational charge. A group of authors argue that Bologna has been overwhelmingly promoting the economic agenda of Europe on the expense of the deeply embedded tradition of cultural role of higher education across Europe, and in the same time blatantly ignoring and thereby jeopardising the diverse intellectual traditions and identities of universities (Tomusk 2004). Along these lines of interpretation, the Bologna Process hosts a conflict between two opposing rationales for internationalisation: the economic competitiveness vs. the academic values and cooperation (Halvorsen and Nyhagen 2011).

A somehow more cultural explanation of the Bologna Process views it as continuity to the historical role of higher education in the continent: "The Bologna Process builds on the heritage of European universities, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances is very much a part of this heritage. The public responsibility for higher education also means conserving and building on this heritage, and to transfer it to future generations" (Bergan 2005, 25). The authors

that took a decisively positive stand, view Bologna as a comprehensive reform approach that avoided the usual economistic reductionist view on higher education and students, that resisted the academic whims and rigidity that navigated wisely between the diversity and convergence promoting the critical engagement and interculturality in the best European liberal tradition (de Sousa Santos 2010).

Some other authors explain the Bologna Process as a counteraction to the advancing power of the EU Commission in higher education sector. Namely, the Bologna Process can be interpreted as an attempt to recover a national and educational sector initiative as a countermove to the power of Commission and to reform giving priority to economic concerns (Olsen and Maassen 2007, 7). With a more elaborated touch, Gornitzka (2010) argues that the Bologna Process established itself as autonomous and sector-internal, outside the supranational (EU) political order with the pertaining policy networks, epistemic communities and institutional background. But this did not last long without intrusions by other sectors and sites of governance. The EU Lisbon strategy brought higher education into the centre of EU integration project as an answer to the global competitiveness race. The political momentum of the knowledge society programmatic orientation was strong enough to penetrate also the Bologna Process, bringing along the logics and priorities of other sectors, such as employment and regional development (Gornitzka 2010, 545).

In terms of the dilemma between binding or voluntary nature of the process, Pauline Ravinet (2008) argued that the Knowledge Society paradigm provides a new cognitive matrix in which the international reform obligations seem acceptable or even necessary and that this couples well with the use of internationally agreed policy as leverage for domestic reforms. Bologna objectives match with, or better, can be fit into the idea of Knowledge society. This added momentum in the persuasion process and gradually transformed a flexible policy cooperation into a system of monitored coordination (Ravinet 2008, 365).

Eva Hartman (2008) went a step further in her interpretation. She interpreted the policy mechanisms proposed by the Bologna Process, such as quality assurance guidelines, recognition regimes, European Quality Assurance Register, as a blend of soft and hard regulation mechanisms as the result of consultation technology reaching consensus between the states, civil society and academic community. The so formed assortment of regulatory mechanisms and policy solutions represents a stage towards acceptance of a constitution-like

supranational order to cater for further commodification of social relations, including shrinking of the state, privatisation of public services (Hartman 2008).

In this sense, the Bologna Process can be viewed also as the process of creation of a single market for higher education services, increasingly delivered on a competitive basis (Robertson 2010c, 33). This has also its relational dynamics towards external world. In the external dimension, Bologna represents a set of mechanisms that lead European higher education towards rising global attractiveness (Zgaga 2006). The ministers steer the process of reform towards higher attractiveness and competitiveness and thereby enter the global stage, while at the same time they strengthen the national systems in the view of defending them from market forces, privatisation and commodification of higher education (Kwiek 2004, 9). Europe tries to position its higher education globally and participates for its share on the global market of education services (Robertson 2010c, 32). In the political and policy efforts to make the European universities attractive, the internationalisation of higher education meets the globalisation of higher education in a dialectical relationship (Marginson and van der Wende 2007, 12).

On the more extreme end of interpretations of the Bologna Process, we can find the civil society movements. Among the outspoken are the movements against privatisation and globalisation of higher education, known for organising street protests[9]. These groups often view Bologna as an instrument of neoliberal agenda that goes along with the privatization and commodification of higher education. In this context, the attempt to schedule higher education on the agenda of WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is yet another indicator of the attempt to push higher education on the global market.

4.3 Discourses ideas and context: the overview of the Bologna documents

In technical terms, the Bologna Process is a political process based on agreements between ministers responsible for higher education. In the first decade of the process, ministers met biannually to sign the common declaration/communiqué. The series of communiqués represent milestones on the evolutionary path of the process. They are the result of the work of the intergovernmental structures in-between the biannual summits on the ministerial level

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[9] http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20100314085140689 (18.2.2012)

involving coordination, negotiation, seminars and other forms of policy and political activity (Zgaga 2004; Ravinet 2008). These events and meetings mostly involved civil servants from the ministries, but not exclusively. The Bologna Process is unique due to its very strong participation of intergovernmental organisations like the Council of Europe, supranational organs like the European Commission, and stakeholders' organisations, most notably student organisations and higher education institutions.

The role of the follow-up structures has varied through the duration of the process, but in principle they carried out the decisions of the ministers, monitored implementation at the national level, assessed the situation and proposed priorities for the next period. The ministerial communiqués have been a result of the work of these follow-up structures and can be considered a political platform for the co-ordination of reforms. The Bologna follow-up structures represent an example of international policy arena, where the policy is generated, coordinated and negotiated. In discursive institutionalist terms it is possible to talk about the coordinative sphere where coordinative discourse is produced.

Sorbonne, Paris 1998

The very first document, a preamble to the widespread Bologna Process, was signed by ministers (from) of Italy, France, Germany and the United Kingdom in 1998. According to Pauline Ravinet (2005) who carried out a field research, including the interviews with crucial actors of the time, the ministers were convened ad-hoc, without a significant preliminary coordination. French minister Claude Allègre wanted something memorable for the anniversary of La Sorbonne - the oldest university in France. He thought that the meeting of ministers might contribute to the solemnity of the event. But probably he did not imagine what impact this meeting would have on the future course of events in the European higher education policy arena and for the future of higher education in Europe.

The three continental countries (Germany, Italy and France) were all in some sort of contemplation phase of a reform of higher education and all the reform ideas revolved around the issue of degree structure, looking up to the solution already introduced by the UK. The two-cycle degree structure was also the core element of the policy proposal laid down in the *Sorbonne Declaration*. It shaped the course of the domestic higher education reforms. Namely the structure of higher education degrees is so crucial and determinant that the Sorbonne proposal created a path dependency which would be a year later enhanced in the Bologna Declaration (Ravinet 2005, 25).

In the first lines of the Sorbonne Declaration the four ministers announced that they want to see European integration happen on grounds other than just financial and economic and call on universities as central institutions of Western civilisation to play an active role in this. The evoking of the European tradition reflects a strong normative message that the ministers wanted to send out in the communicative dimension of their discourse. Reforming the degree structure into two tires and equipping the system with transparency tools such as ECTS, were the main policy instruments presented as the measures to encourage the mobility of students. Increasing mobility was presented as an aim of the "harmonising" policy and portrayed as the traditional characteristic of European educational past. Thus, in the case of this text the discourse on mobility was appealing to the tradition, historical argument and the normative ideas and thereby establishes a normative discursive line based on the established (old) European institutional background.[10]

In the same (normative) fashion the four ministers also stressed that the regulation by democratic authorities is essential. To some degree, these strong statements underpin the interpretation of Bologna as a response of bigger member states to the EU Commission's growing power in the domain of higher education. There is little direct reference to the economic rationale in the Sorbonne text. Even where the ministers connected the recognition of diplomas, the mobility of students and employability of graduates, they did not refer to the economic necessity. Instead, the discourse was toned with the reference to the European tradition and cultural meaning of universities converging in the narrative of the Europe of Universities.

The strong discursive regularities calling for democratic control and invoking the cultural as opposed to economic/financial rationale for Europeanisation of higher education, makes it possible to interpret the traces of tension between the economic/market origins of EU integration and the cultural role of education as constitutive institution of the nation state. But at this very stage, it is only clear that the ministers wanted to communicate this out to the public.

The communicative dimension is understandable also if we consider the Ravinet (2005, 2008) conclusions that one of the principal motives of the French minister to sponsor the adoption of an international declaration on higher education reform was actually an attempt to create

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[10]However, the mobility was not unusual in the contemporary European policy discourse. Namely, the Sorbonne declaration was signed in the high times of the idea on market integration of the EU and the pertaining mobility of skilled labour.

leverage for domestic reforms. Hence, from this angle the discourse of the Sorbonne Declaration can be, to a considerable extent, interpreted as communicative, since it was used to communicate the ideas to the domestic actors and lay public. On the other hand, the very concrete policy solutions mark an intensive degree of coordinative nature of the discourse. The seemingly technical solution on the degree structure set the course of the future policy and political action and had an unprecedented effect on the Europeanisation of higher education for decades to come.

Bologna 1999

A year later in Bologna, the ministers again saw higher education as a field of multidimensional European integration with mobility reiterated as the central policy element. The political initiative took off despite initial opposition from smaller old EU members (such as Austria and the Netherlands) who were disturbed by the solo action of the four big EU members (Zgaga 2004, 26-27).

Discursively, the concept of student, staff and researchers *mobility* somehow starts gaining momentum in its role of justification of the international policy project in higher education. It provides a sort of overarching normative argument in favour of the policy ideas and concrete action lines proposed in the declaration. But at the same time it can be interpreted as reflecting the dynamics in the larger context of European integration. Namely in the Mitterrand-Delors period, the idea of market unification as the integrative paradigm of the European integration brought along the necessity for the free movement of labour force and thus required measures to facilitate the employment. Easy readable and comparable degrees and the relevance of the first cycle for the European labour market are two discursive examples hinting at the programmatic idea on united European market and the pertaining freedoms.

The discourse in the Bologna declaration (1999) drew on the normative claims and historic dependency of the integrative policies evoking the *awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space.* However, it proposes also a concrete guideline on how to advance the integration epitomised in the abstract idea on the *Europe of Knowledge*. The discursive use of the concept of Europe of Knowledge expresses the vision of integrated continent, hence the nature of the integrative dimension of the Bologna initiative. This is also a clear reference to the programmatic idea on the necessity to solve the problem of European economic competitiveness by involving knowledge as an element of production and exchange.

The text reflects also the attempt to evoke the common sense and normalise the cognitive programmatic idea of Europe of knowledge. In fact, the ministers agreed that knowledge is *widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth* (Bologna Declaration 1999). Following the same fashion, in Bologna 1999 appeared the first explicit announcement of the idea of competing with other parts of the world. The world believed that the higher education was supposed to be attractive. The economic rationale was slowly creeping in. Employability and international competitiveness of European higher education system emerge as the essential discursive elements and reflect the cognitive ideas on higher education as the engine of competitiveness.

However, the Europeanisation nature of the declaration is not without its limits. In fact, the internationalisation and Europeanisation narrative runs through reference to "diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of university autonomy". The ministers continue the defensive attitude in relation to education that started in Sorbonne. The discursive strategy transpires the hesitation of individual countries to give away their regulative competences in the field of higher education[11]. It is possible to discern the development of an appropriateness driven (normative) discourse with the emphasis on the sovereignty of nation states over the education policy. Thereby the ministers were securing the intergovernmental nature of the process as opposed to what it would be if it was run by the EU Commission. In the preparatory phase it was explicitly discussed even about allowing the presence of the EU Commission's representative (Zgaga 2004, 39-40).

Prague 2001

A strong point with regard to ideas in the Prague Communiqué was the commitment to viewing higher education as a *public good*. The ministers supported the idea that "higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community" (Prague Communiqué 2001). The latter suggests they were thinking of the competing perceptions of students, e.g. students as customers. This leads us to a further note in the document: The ministers acknowledged a surging trend that could antagonise the supremacy of the state regulation of higher education – the so-called *transnational education*. The concept of public

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[11] According to the interview 4, the sensitivity to this issue reflected also from the argument on the use of the word harmonization in the declaration which was interpreted in different ways by different ministers and drafters of the Bologna declaration. Some countries were fiercely against any sort of unification.

good and public responsibility remained, however, vaguely defined and were further elaborated in the following years.

On the other side, *Europe of Knowledge* was replaced with the *Knowledge based society and economy* under the heading of Lifelong learning. Lifelong learning became sort of a code for the strategies, *necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life* (Prague communiqué 2001). Hence, the argumentative device of necessity for competitiveness reappeared, thereby confirming the political view (cognitive idea) of education as instrument for global competitiveness of European economy. The importance of mobility and easy readable and comparable degrees was reiterated. Academic and professional recognition of qualifications were taken into the Bologna discourse from the EU directives and the Council of Europe convention on recognition (see Chapter 5).

These discursive shifts are a symptom of something larger happening in the coordinative political sphere, especially in relation to the proximity of the adoption of the EU Lisbon strategy (2000). The contours of the idea of professional mobility in the united European Labour market became clearer. By the time Prague ministerial meeting took place, the EU programmatic idea of knowledge economy became an integral part of the Bologna discourse. Regarding this developments it is important to acknowledge that the EU Commission was invited to sit at the Bologna table in Prague in 2001 and became part of the Bologna Process Follow-up Group (BFUG)[12].

Berlin 2003[13]

An intensive ministerial summit in terms of ideas and concepts was the one organised by Germany in September 2003. Already 33 countries were present and the consultative members (interest groups and other international/transnational actors) were relatively well integrated into the policy process (Zgaga 2003).

The preamble indicates there was a lively debate involving ideas behind preparation of the ministerial summit. The social dimension concept moved from its marginal position (a mere

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[12]The BFUG was a permanent body of representatives (civil servants) from the Bologna Process member states. Their central task was to co-ordinate the discussion and draft communiqués that were to be adopted by the ministers. Within the BFUG framework, thematic seminars were also organised in order to address the most salient issues and topics in higher education.

[13] The author of this paper attended the Berlin summit as a member of a national delegation of the Republic of Slovenia and therefore some accounts reflect his personal observations and memories of the event.

mentioning) in Prague Communiqué to the Berlin Communiqué's preamble. Immediately in the next sentence comes some sort of attempt to balance what in previous meetings was referred to as competitiveness by stressing the

> *objective of improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities both at the national and at the European level* (Berlin Communiqué 2003).

Higher education was seen as an institution with the purpose of fostering the social mobility of disadvantaged groups.

The Berlin Communiqué includes a section that deserves closer attention. While the preceding communiqués were all negotiated in advance by the working groups to be formally adopted at the summits, in Berlin the negotiation and political confrontation happened in real time. The French delegation took advantage of the open floor to propose a highly normative sentence into the communiqué text[14]. The amendment aimed for a clear political commitment to higher education based on academic values:

> *They* [the ministers] *emphasise that in international academic cooperation and exchanges, academic values should prevail* (Berlin Communiqué 2003).

In the political action surrounding this line of the communiqué it was clear that the Bologna policy arena acknowledged the transnational industry of higher education as an important trend and that it was necessary to address it. The parallel developments in the WTO GATS negotiations represented an important contingent event substantially influencing the course of rising concerns over the very nature of higher education. Including higher education into an agreement dedicated to trade in services would have meant understanding higher education as a commodity in the global market. From this occurrence it is possible to interpret that the Bologna Process played the role of a common political platform or a forum through which to express the ideas and affirm the norms and values that the political establishment in Europe stands for[15].

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[14] At the meeting in Berlin two other amendments were proposed by the delegations of the French Community of Belgiumand Croatia.
[15] The discursive interaction triggered by the French delegation was found important for the aims of this study and was thus dealt with in detail in Chapter 7

There is another substantial discursive milestone to be found in the Berlin Communiqué. In the third paragraph of the preamble a direct reference is made to the EU Lisbon Strategy. The Lisbon strategy is somehow a symbolic political initiative that seals the programmatic level idea on knowledge as an essential element in EU economic future and thereby a step closer to normalisation of cognitive idea on higher education feeding directly into the economic activity in terms of human resource and innovation (Jessop 2008, Robertson 2008). The previously mild reference to knowledge as an element of the European integration evolved into the clear discourse and ideational stream following the rationale of knowledge as the key element of the EU economic competitiveness (see Chapter 8). The reasoning was based upon a sort of problem solving consequential logic and can be associated to the rational choice type of argument on the necessity for the publicly funded universities to yield in terms of direct benefits to the economy and society at large (see Chapter 12).

From the account of two interviewees (Interviews 4 and 5) transpires the attempt of the EU Commission to keep the Bologna policy agenda concise by focusing on few policy instruments, mainly those aiming at mobility and the recognition of qualifications in the labour market. According to the interviewees (5, 6 and 20) the EU Commission representative was disturbed by the increasing complexity and scope of the Bologna agenda. The EU officials regretted the advance of the normative discourse and the expansion of the abstract and vague concepts (such as social dimension, public good, public responsibility, etc.) instead of keeping the documents concise and focused on the concrete and tangible policy solutions that would make higher education relevant to the economic strategies (Interview 3, 20 and see also the section on London Communiqué below).

The EU Commission had successfully made its way into the influential position within the Bologna Process and, by the time the Berlin summit took place, integrated well into the structure and logic of communication of the Bologna coordinative sphere.

Bergen 2005

Besides the substantially enlarged and therefore rigid Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) consisting of representatives of ministries, stakeholders and the European Commission, a smaller organ named the Bologna Board was established in the period between Berlin and Bergen. Yet, in order to keep the host country of the upcoming summit involved and to ensure the smoothness of the preparations, it was decided that the host country should run a secretariat. This reduced the power of the EU presiding country (which had by then co-ordinated the

BFUG) and thereby diminished the influence of the EU Commission. In fact, "the country holding the EU presidency usually worked closely with the Commission, which was also visible in the drafting of the communiqué process" (Interview 1).

The growing importance of the secretariat and the influx of various, especially normative ideas into the Bologna Process diminished the policy manual nature of the Bologna documents. This compelled the EU Commission to abandon the Bologna as the main window into influence the higher education policy in the member states and to come up with alternative ways to promote the policy solutions that would in its view accelerate the fulfilment of Lisbon programmatic agenda. This was done through direct support and assistance to the reform process on the national level in a form of well-financed projects involving the governments, various agencies and higher education institutions (Batory and Lindstrom 2011).

By Bergen the issue of trade in higher education services moved out of the spotlight. This was also because the developments in the WTO saw public education out of the agenda. Instead, the attention was focused on the mechanisms to tame the negative effects of the rising phenomenon of transnational education. The endeavour to regulate transnational providers, especially in terms of quality was trusted to UNESCO and the OECD. The result of the debate was a direct reference to the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision of Cross Border Higher Education[16].

Quality assurance was in the centre of the Bergen meeting. The Bergen schedule included the adoption of the *European Standards and Guidelines in Quality Assurance*. This represented a soft, non-binding document but nevertheless a supranational reference to how the quality assurance systems should be organised in the signatory countries in the pursuit of transparency, mutual trust and recognition, and thereby facilitating the mobility of qualified labour. Together with the qualification framework, recognition of qualifications and some other tools, this indicates a tendency of shifting the national policy issues to the supranational level in a non-binding form (see Chapter 11.3).

Employers became official partners of the process through their pan-European representative organisation UNICE. This provides a clear sign of employers' interest in higher education as well as the ministers' willingness to include them in the shaping of higher education of the future. The opponents of the commodification of education – the students – did not welcome

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[16] Published by Unesco and OECD in 2005, available at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/51/35779480.pdf (20.10.2013).

the presence of employers at the table. The student representative in the Bologna follow-up group recalled:

> *UNICE was seen as an organisation in the tradition of the European round table of industrialists, fostering more market-oriented approaches to higher education. Therefore, the ESIB was fairly sceptical about their inclusion in the official bodies of the Bologna Process* (Interview 1).

At the same time, Education International (EI) also joined the process to represent teachers' trade unions. With both organisations on-board, the spirit of social partnership found its way into the Bologna Process. This novelty extended the group of non-national participants in the Bologna follow-up structures and thereby affected the nature of the coordinative sphere. With the entry of the EI, the political sphere further enlarged and expanded the epistemic community. At the same time it also acknowledged universities as working organisations and not only academic communities.

From Berlin to Bergen the employability became constant concept denoting cognitive idea on the transformation (economic instrumentalisation) of higher education for improving competitiveness in line with the hegemonic political rationale of Knowledge economy/society. Often this ideational stream was interwoven with the adversary normative ideas brought forward by the concepts of public responsibility, cultural diversity and heritage. In some segments the text very obviously tries to reconcile the competing views on the role, purpose and functions of higher education:

> *We must cherish our rich heritage and cultural diversity in contributing to a knowledge-based society. We commit ourselves to upholding the principle of public responsibility for higher education in the context of complex modern societies. As higher education is situated at the crossroads of research, education and innovation, it is also the key to Europe's competitiveness* (Bergen Communiqué 2005).

The last sentence contains a distinctive element of the European Commission discourse appearing in its communications throughout the 2000s – namely the *knowledge triangle* between research education and innovation (European Commission 2003, 2005).

London 2007

After Bergen and towards the London summit, the nature of the process changed. From the phase of developing basic principles it moved towards the discussion about the implementation (Zgaga 2012, 30). Accordingly, the London Communiqué did not expand the scope of the Bologna agenda significantly. Rather, it deepened the existing elements or clarified them. For example, the London communique defined the notion of equity in higher education and thereby contributed to the clarification of the concept of social dimension.

The outstanding element of the London Communique was indeed the definition of purposes of higher education institution as a self-standing discursive category. It reflected the evolution of roles, functions and meaning that has been attributed to higher education in the precedent years of the Bologna Process. In Prague, the Bologna rhetoric took on the notion of higher education as a public good and public responsibility. A more concrete start in the attribution of roles was noticed in the Berlin Communiqué ranging between strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities on one side and the EU's economic strategy on the other (see above). In Bergen the cultural role and social cohesion were added to the economic role. In London, the ministers agreed on a common definition of the role of higher education institutions in terms of their purposes (HEIs):

> *Our aim is to ensure that our HEIs have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. Those purposes include: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and stimulating research and innovation* (London Communiqué 2007).

This is the first large-scale pan-European political consensus on the purposes of HEIs. The formulation of the range of purposes in the communiqué is largely a result of the Council of Europe's endeavour to maintain the public nature of higher education and its role of strengthening democracy (see Chapter 5).

Insisting on stating explicitly the idea of higher education's multiple purposes in society represents a struggle to link the Bologna discourse to Post-World-War II institutional background (norms, values, historical development) and integrate the strong economistic (cognitive, problem solving) trend in viewing higher education and thereby somehow neutralize it. In other words, the definition of purposes of higher education antagonised the rampant cognitive idea of restricting the Bologna policy proposals to a concise reform agenda for modernising higher education in the direction of strengthening its role in the European

economy. In pursuing the latter, the EU Commission and some countries like the UK insisted in highlighting only a few action lines that in their view (rationally argued) would contribute to the modernisation and goals stated in the EU's Lisbon Strategy:

> *The fact that the Council of Europe did not succeed to incorporate the definition already in the Bergen Communiqué was also a consequence of the constant pressure of the European Commission and some delegations to keep the text neat and concise and focus only on the few, in their view, feasible goals: recognition, quality assurance and degree structure* (Interview 3).

Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve 2009

In the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué it is possible to observe a relatively clear political reference to the normative platform of ideas on higher education in Europe. The political consensus on discursive level is firmly built around the normative ideational line of multi-purpose nature of higher education. Its economic function remains only one of the aspects, not superior to others. In paragraph 4, the ministers reconfirm the values and related definitions from previous communiqués anchored in the following concepts: public responsibility, full range of purposes, diversity, institutional autonomy, academic freedom and social equity.

However beneath the well displayed normative ideas and pertaining communicative discourse, the cognitive ideas on transformation of higher education in line with the needs of European economy is still strong in the text. There is a well embedded discursive trail bringing up the argumentative line that asks universities *to be responsive to societal needs and to be accountable* including the labour market (Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué 2009). For example, the concept of *employability* carries along the cognitive idea of shifting to the outcome-oriented education with the emphasis on transversal skills that supposedly…

> [...] *empowers the individual to fully seize the opportunities in changing labour markets.* A series of policy solutions are proposed to *allow institutions to be more responsive to employers' needs and employers to better understand the educational perspective* (Ibid).

Moreover, similarly to the influence of WTO GATS negotiations on Berlin communiqué, also the discursive trail in this Communiqué shows the traces of the contingent events on the global scale. The document was drafted in the midst of what was called *the global financial crisis*, at a time when the news was pervaded by the dramatic turns in the economy and subsequent plans

for budget cuts by virtually all Bologna member state participants. The ministers took note of this in the Communiqué and declared the importance of *innovation on the basis of the integration of education and research at all levels* for the economic recovery – thereby reiterating the centrality of universities to the economy.

However, in the same paragraph another antagonism emerged. In the attempt to counter-balance the economic rationale, the ministers stressed the importance of higher education for other aspects of the development of society:

> *We recognise that higher education has a key role to play if we are to successfully meet the challenges we face and if we are to promote the cultural and social development of our societies. Therefore, we consider public investment in higher education of utmost priority* (Ibid).

Here we can trace another pair of contending ideational streams. The reference to public funding is part of discursive strategy in a larger discursive topic involving paradigmatic or philosophical ideas on the organisation, the size and the functions of the state. The appeal for public funding indicates the resistance to the new governance models where the state shifts from providing services to monitoring the quality and/of outcome. The funding of public systems (like higher education) is meant to become increasingly private and in some cases involving also the private providers leading to the shift in the meaning of higher education towards a purchasable service under individual responsibility (this was further presented and theorised in the Chapter 11.1). The financial crisis and the budget cuts can build up a 'smoke curtain' and an excuse for advancing in the direction of rearrangement of the state against the general beliefs and norms. One possible outcome of such organisational shift can be the privatisation of the provision of public goods and can lead towards the increased market-based higher education. This ideational trend has encountered a normative resistance on the national and transnational scales, especially by the stakeholders such as teacher and student unions[17].

In the paragraph 8 of the Communiqué, there is an interesting follow-up to defining and benchmarking equity from the previous Communiqué: the reference to *equal opportunities to quality education* and the *diversity of student body that should reflect the Europe's populations*

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[17] The struggle of European student unions (associated in the ESU) against private funding (especially tuition fees) has been extremely strong throughout the Bologna Process which clearly transpires from their policy documents on http://www.esu-online.org/documents/policy/(22.6.2012). The normative obstacles to the advancing commodification are presented in more detail in the Chapter 7.

(Ibid). The ideational charge of this element seems to fit in the normative ideational stream stemming from the welfare state institutional background of Post-World War II Europe. However, this discursive line does not contain an ideational construction that would actually stand against the project of withdrawing of the state in favour of private financing and providers. The idea on how the *access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies* (Ibid.) is very much in line with the project of transforming higher education in payable service where the state only cares about the vulnerable margins of the society.

This ideational line is followed up in the paragraph 23 where the ministers neutralise the previous reference to public responsibility by calling for a limited role of public funding:

> *Within a framework of public responsibility we confirm that public funding remains the main priority to guarantee equitable access and further sustainable development of autonomous higher education institutions. Greater attention should be paid to seeking new and diversified funding sources and methods* (Ibid).

The Louvain Communiqué brought into the Bologna policy arena another element worth mentioning: the policy idea of multi-dimensional transparency tools. This can be understood as a response to the surging popularity of rankings, league tables, benchmarking and similar approaches, but also as a new supranational (soft) regulative tool. More concretely the European Commission financed the project of mapping and multi-dimensional ranking of the European higher education institutions[18] in order to foster the information on and diversification of higher education institutions (Interview 6). Transparency is the main communicative concept that is used to justify the initiative and the necessity to move the monitoring and soft regulation to the supranational level (see Chapters 8.3 and 11.3).

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[18]http://www.u-map.eu/ (23.7.2012)

4.4. The ideational pattern underlying the Europeanisation of higher education: Analysis and conceptualisations

After I have reviewed the main political documents and obtained insights behind the scenes with the help of some important witnesses, it is clear that the Bologna Process is not a single instrument facilitating any idea or ideology and that it does not follow a single ideological trajectory.

The Bologna Process works as a policy arena for the international co-ordination of national reforms in a substantially changed nature of contemporary higher education. It also serves as a venue for confronting opposing ideas or a podium for political communication. Bologna Process can be described as a platform for the articulation, elaboration and justification of ideas through an interactive process of coordinative discourse. The ideas are confronted during the process of working out the common ground for national reforms (negotiation, bargaining and persuasion). In discursive institutionalist terms it can be characterised as a coordinative (policy) sphere.

The coordinative discourse is created in the complex process of policy construction where ideas are articulated, elaborated, justified. The process of coordinating the ideas through discourses is not limited to national governments but extended to international and transnational entities which promote either cognitive ideas (justified in terms of necessity) or normative ideas (justified through an appeal to norms, values and the related world order). National and transnational actors seek to coordinate agreement among themselves and thereby generate a colourful discourse that contains various ideational streams and somehow reflects the minimum common denominator on the role of higher education in contemporary society.

The context of the Bologna discourse is variable. The discursive interaction was notably affected by contingent events (WTO negotiations, the Lisbon strategy, the global financial crisis …). Namely, the process is evolving at a time of an intensified regional (and global) scale dynamics in a post-modern Western society where knowledge has been moved into the centre of the imagined economic realm.

From the analysed data it was also possible to interpret a considerable level of agency policy reflected in the process of strategic action. Some of discourses are stronger and more persistent,

while some ideas prevail over others. There is a strong indication of the ideological convergence of the ideas and a powerful ideational and structural presence pushing the higher education reform towards the ideational tenets of what some authors (e.g. Schmidt and Thatcher 2013; Harvey 2005) refer to as *neo-liberalism*. I grouped the identified discursive regularities and the pertaining ideational rules into three major streams with the purpose to provide a heuristic basis for further analysis and interpretation:

1. The idea of prioritising education reforms that would contribute to the competitiveness of the European economy on the global scale;

2. the idea of multi-role higher education as a central institution in European society based on the values of the Western liberal democratic institutional arrangement and the values of the welfare state;

3. the idea of higher education as purchasable service, a commodity and an industry that operates in a competitive global market.

These ideational streams are running on different levels of generality. While the first reflects the cognitive nature of ideas and belongs to the programmatic level, the second and the third imply a more normative nature and can be interpreted as more general. They are reflecting the spirit of the time and the general direction of change. The second stream emerged and persisted as reaction, or better, resistance to the supremacy of the first stream and sometimes against the third stream. This discussion is deepened in part III of this study, while the three identified streams are presented in more detail below and thereby offer the basis for further analysis of the substantive content of ideas in the Bologna discourse.

4.4.1 Dominant political rationale of *Knowledge economy* and the role of the EU

One of the most outstanding discursive regularities found in the texts of Bologna Communiqués is certainly the argument of the necessity to reform European higher education in order to make it more attractive, competitive and to contribute to the European economic strategy. The reference to the Knowledge economy is the usual marker of this type of reasoning. The phrase *Europe of Knowledge* first appeared in the Bologna Declaration (1999), but at that time still as an element of European integration. It was accompanied with broader social concepts such as

social and human growth, common social and cultural space and *European citizenship*. However, the discursive portrayal of education as instrumental to equipping European citizens with *the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium* hinted to the underlying idea of economic instrumentalisation of higher education (Bologna Declaration 1999). The latter began to gain importance in the Prague Communiqué (2001) in the frame of the political rationale of *Knowledge economy* and *Knowledge society*, therein openly referred to. It was decisively re-affirmed in Berlin 2003 and has persisted throughout the examined Bologna decade, although in a less prominent way after Berlin summit.

In parallel to the Bologna Process, the EU adopted the paramount political strategy for its global competitiveness. The correlation between the outset of the Lisbon strategy, adopted in 2000, and the first mentioning of the Knowledge economy in the Bologna Process in Prague (2001) is thus not coincidental. In addition, on the same Bologna ministerial meeting the EU Commission joined the Bologna coordinative sphere, which additionally opened the way to the economic policy domains into the regional higher education coordinative forum. The discursive presence of the Knowledge economy was initially strong, but it started to lose momentum at some point after Berlin (2003). Ever since then it has been counterbalanced, but it has never disappeared.

EU policy dynamics represented a significant contingent factor that determined the discourse and ideational platform of the Bologna Process. With knowledge as central element of the Lisbon strategy, the EU gained legitimacy to deal with higher education and became, in fact, a discursive venue (coordinative sphere) by itself. Most of the documents on higher education originating from there have been produced by the EU Commission in the form of Communications. The knowledge economy as ideational, institutional and structural phenomenon was examined in Chapter 12.

In the discursive institutionalist fashion, the Knowledge economy/society imaginary can be characterised as programmatic level idea, originating from a problem definition and proposing an imagined meta-direction harbouring the solutions. Within this ideational realm, higher education is primarily viewed as an instrument for achieving the EU's policy objectives, i.e. solving the salient economic challenges (problems) and making Europe economically competitive. A number of policies and instruments (quality assurance, qualification framework, ECTS …) are devised towards achieving these ends, including the system level mechanisms to check and stimulate the performance and efficiency in achieving the goals. Thus, in the ideas

pertaining to the Knowledge economy rationale it is possible to interpret the cognitive nature – justified in the necessity and consequential logic.

It would be, however, reductionist to attribute the penetration and persistence of the economistic rationale in the Bologna Process only to the presence and activity of the EU Commission. As argued in the Chapter 8.2 and theorised in the Chapter 12, the prevailing economistic view on higher education is a consequence of the reconfiguration of social forces and the consequent changes in the institutional settings. These larger shifts resulted in a sort of hegemonic position of the ideas pertaining to the Knowledge economy programmatic imaginary. The salience of economic policy propelled the horizontal dynamics between policy fields whereby the non-educational policy domains such as labour market policy and economic competitiveness penetrated into higher education (Gornitzka 2010, 540). Thus, in a horizontal dynamics between policy arenas the Bologna Process has been affected by the elements of the EU Lisbon strategy (Ibid. 545).

4.4.2 The multiple role of higher education in the liberal-democratic institutional background

The second ideational stream presented in this Chapter was identified as parallel and adversary discourse to the economic instrumentalisation of higher education presented above. The adversary position can be interpreted as a sort of resistance to the strong and widespread cognitive idea on higher education in the Knowledge economy. Namely the latter partially interferes with the established norms, values and beliefs in national institutional settings. From the initial role of resistance, it evolved into a permanent ideational stream, based in the post-World War II institutional background (see Chapter 10).

However, a good connoisseur of the Bologna Process would not overlook the presence of the normative ideas already present in the very outset of the process, in Sorbonne 1998. Notwithstanding the motives that guided the four ministers to meet and sign the international document, the discourse transpiring from this document (the Sorbonne declaration) reflects very much the institutional setting of the Post-World-War II Europe and invokes its cultural dimension besides the economic integration (overemphasised in the EU). However, by Berlin meeting in 2003, the discourse gave in to the economistic logic and thereby took a sharp turn towards a more instrumental handling of higher education.

In Prague, the Bologna discourse took on the notion of higher education as *a public good* and *public responsibility*. A more concrete counterbalancing of adversary ideational streams can be interpreted in the Berlin Communiqué where the discourse is ranging between strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities on one side and the EU's economic strategy on the other (see above). In Bergen, the cultural role and social cohesion were added to the economic role. In London, the counterbalancing communicative action reached an interesting compromise. Namely, the ministers agreed on a common definition of the purposes of higher education institutions. This definition can be interpreted as the key ideational rule in establishing the equilibrium between the economistic view on higher education and the historical role of universities in the post-World-War II Western institutional tradition.

One of the actors that was more consistent in promoting the normative ideational line was the Council of Europe. In its policies higher education is considered a central institution in achieving democratic and equitable societies. The confrontation with the economistic discourse and ideas was somehow inevitable and once it set the course, it persisted throughout the analysed paper trail (see Chapter 5).

The perseverance in bringing forward the reference to the traditional institutional background, contributed to weakening the EU Commission's influence and consequently determined the ideational balance in the Bologna documents. It is difficult to argue that there is a fundamental ideological clash between the EU Commission and the Council of Europe. Instead, there is a divergence in priorities and ideas on higher education's role in European societies and consequent competition in persuading other actors through communicative discourse.

4.4.3 State, market, globalisation and the commodification of higher education

Transnational higher education is one of the phenomena that is on the rise and that is indeed considerably affecting the nature of higher education. Universities have been opening branch campuses, offering their services online, ever bigger numbers of students and teachers are moving across borders (Knight 2003). The scope of transnational education grew till the point that it became an item on the agenda of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which means that the education is in consideration for liberalisation within General Agreement on Trade in

Services, and if this happens, the states will give up some of their regulatory competencies in favour of market and WTO bodies (Robertson and Vergar 2008).

The analysis of the Bologna texts revealed that the trend of commodification and trade in education has been considered throughout the process. The WTO GATS negotiations played a significant role as a contingent event that triggered the communicative inter-action within the Bologna political arena. In Berlin (2003), the possibility to take a clear stand against the commercial principles in internationalisation of higher education divided the choir of ministers responsible for education. The discursive interaction was strong and offers good set of data for further analysis about the ideas (see Chapter 7).

It is difficult to trace the agency that stands behind the idea of promoting commodified higher education, but external trends and attitudes of some governments have made it a relevant issue in the Bologna forum. A careful analysis of the discourse and the implication of its materialisation, reveals a broader conceptual or paradigmatic shifts pertaining to (or implying) the trend of commodification of education (see Chapter 11). For example, the tendency to promote the supranational soft regulation like quality assurance standards, qualification framework, multi-dimensional transparency tool etc. indicates a trend of shifting regulatory competences from the national to the supranational level which fits into the idea of shifting the regulation of transnational education to WTO in order to facilitate the global market related processes (Scherrer 2005; Hartman 2008). Together with the erosion of the role of the state when the public funding was upgraded with private (implying tuition fees and loans) and with increasing managerial autonomy of the universities, we can anticipate a silhouette of a larger ideological project running in the background of the higher education reforms and shaping the discourse of the Bologna Process. In this light, the commodification of education can be considered as part of the post-modern market-economistic view of the global world and is widely referred to as the *neoliberal* ideational course (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, Harvey 2005; Hill 2007).

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In the following Chapters of Part II, I ventured further into the Bologna coordinative sphere and deepened the analysis of the discursive regularities, ideational rules, the pertaining logic of communication and the given institutional context identified and presented above.

5. *Public responsibility* and the purposes of higher education – reconciling the traditional European university with the emerging ideations

5.1 Higher education and the public good

The concepts of the state and the public good often appear somehow linked to each other, both in the theoretical perspectives and in the various imaginaries throughout the history of western civilisation. In modern times, ideations of the state have been necessarily related to the public and rooted in the normative postulate that in any democracy what is good for the state has to be for the good of the people – and what is good for the people is for the people to determine together (Nixon 2011, 16). In this imaginary of a democratic state the people are supposed to be essentially constituted as active citizens in the public realm. As noted in Chapter 4, one of the components of the normative ideation of multi-purpose higher education is the contribution to the public sphere and thus the contribution to the continuous building of citizenship and a democratic society.

Until recently, it has been difficult to consider *public responsibility* for higher education as an outstanding element of the political action in the field of higher education. Within modern history, higher education has been traditionally more or less closely related to the project of the nation state, and thus inherently a public affair. Thus, when it comes to European countries, the responsibility of the public authorities for all aspects of the regulation and provision of higher education has been considered a constitutive element of the nation-state institutional setting and therefore highly normative and undisputed.

The discussion on public responsibility for higher education has become prominent in the modern regionalisation of higher education in Europe. It appeared as an important discursive regularity in the Bologna Process discourses (see Chapter 4.4.2). It persisted throughout the process and significantly contributed to the deliberation on the nature and meaning of higher education. At the same time the appearance of public responsibility in the Bologna discourses revealed the institutional fabric determining the European social and political space.

5.2 Higher education, *public good*, *public responsibility* and the Council of Europe as the site of coordinative discourse

The organisation that has dedicated most attention to the concept of *public responsibility for higher education* in the coordinative sphere of the Bologna Process and, furthermore, made it one of the cornerstones of its policy on higher education and research, is the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 in order to aid the development and consolidation of the values expressed in the European Cultural Convention. Ever since it has carried out a specific mission anchored in an ideological basis promoting the fundaments of the Western institutional order. In this respect it has played a role in securing a common regional understanding of certain concepts related to higher education which have been widely used in political discourse (Melo 2013). In its documents it stresses the multiple roles of higher education in society, especially in developing and maintaining a democratic culture, the public responsibility for higher education, and the importance of equal opportunities in higher education for all citizens, the need to guarantee autonomy to HEIs and protect academic freedom (Council of Europe 2007). These discursive elements to a great extent invoke the traditional and normative ideas on higher education that have evolved for centuries and are inherent to the Western (European) political thought and philosophy. Today it is possible to interpret these bundles of ideas as the institutional framework - the foundations for the idea of university in the Western liberal world (see Chapter 10). This pan-European institutional context to the traditional ideas and discourses on university can be considered a constitutive part of the Council of Europe raison d'être.

The fundamental historical distinction of the Council of Europe is also broader membership than the European Union[19]. From its outset it was neither intended nor declared as an economic union, but rather as a cultural organisation. This is an important point to keep in mind when analysing the approach of the Council of Europe to the field of higher education.

The Council of Europe's involvement in higher education began significantly before the Bologna Declaration. For example between 1991 and 1999, within the framework of its Legislative Reform Programme (LRP), the Council of Europe participated in the reform and drafting of new legislation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe "as part of the

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[19] The Council of Europe today counts 47 members.

consolidation of democratic regimes, and of the overall process of transition from centrally planned to social market economies".[20] One of the most significant Council of Europe's projects was the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications, jointly drafted with UNESCO in 1997 and entered into force in 1999. The Lisbon Convention can be considered a sort of precursor to the Bologna Process – a regional platform for institutionalised cooperation in higher education. Its main purpose is to regulate the recognition of higher education qualifications between members of the Council of Europe.

Council of Europe and public responsibility for higher education

However constraining and rigid the institutional context of the ideas and discourses on higher education might have been, the case of the Council of Europe as a European-wide venue of political interaction reveals a certain dynamic and change in the structures of meaning. In the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s, the organisation was exposed to the changes in social forces and so were the policy actors working within and with the offices of the Council of Europe responsible for higher education. The term *public responsibility for higher education* gradually became emblematic for the organisation's internal and external activities.

Before entering the analysis of the logic of communication and the meaning context of the discourse of public responsibility, it is helpful to clarify the basic semantic premise of this term: from the analysis of the paper trail it is possible to conclude that *public responsibility* in the Council of Europe discourse refers to the responsibility of the state or the public authorities. So, the main semantic characteristic of the Council of Europe discourse focusing on the public responsibility for higher education revolves around the relationship between the public authorities and higher education (CDESR 2004; Council of Europe 2007; Council of Europe 2012; Bergan and Weber 2005a). In one of the documents, this was also clearly articulated:

> [...] *While recognising the dual implication of public responsibility, as well as the importance of the policies and activities within higher education and research institutions, the present recommendation focuses on the responsibilities of public authorities* (Council of Europe 2007).

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[20] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/CompletedActivities/LRP_en.asp#P8_213 (5.8.2014)

The concept of *public responsibility* in the service of the Council of Europe and political action in the European higher education policy arena

According to the findings of Susana Jorge de Melo, the Bologna Process has played a decisive role in the reconstructing and defining of the Council of Europe's relation to higher education. She argued that the Council of Europe perceived the Bologna Process as a European level hub in the field of a higher education policy, the leading platform in the construction of a framework for cooperation and therefore an important policy arena to influence. However, she also concluded that direct involvement in the Bologna Process substantially influenced the political and ideational positioning of the Council of Europe regarding higher education (Melo 2013, 54).

The circumstances that gradually developed within the Bologna Process encouraged the Council of Europe to engage in communicative action. Namely in the Bologna Process the Council of Europe found itself at odds with the advancing of the discourse of a Knowledge economy which clearly embraced the idea of higher education as an instrument for achieving the economic competitiveness of Europe (Melo 2013, 51).

In the embryonic phase of the Bologna Process, the prevailing ideas were rooted predominantly in the 'old' European normative context. The spirit of the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations encompassed the grand ideas of uniting Europe in an intellectual, cultural, social and scientific dimension in addition to the ongoing economic integration (Sorbonne Declaration 1998; Bologna Declaration 1999). By the meeting in 2001 at the Prague summit (where the Council of Europe became an official partner to the Bologna Process) it was already clear that the Bologna Process is an initiative with a high political momentum and that it has the potential to affect the national higher education policy. With the adoption of the Prague Communiqué the Knowledge Economy/Society policy imaginary gained a prominent position in the Bologna discourse.

Already in the same communique the cognitive economic rationale is balanced with normative ideas on higher education. Namely the concept of *public responsibility* for higher education appeared the first time together with the concept of *public good*[21]:

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[21] According to the account of interviewee 4, the term/concept of public good was brought to the table by the representative of the student union (ESIB) at one of the preparatory meetings

[The ministers] *supported the idea that higher education should be considered as a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community* (Prague communiqué 2001).

The sentence indicates the discursive strategy of emphasising the state in the central regulatory position as opposed to the idea of deregulated and more market driven (private, transnational) higher education. The interviewed official, who has permanently represented the Council of Europe in the Bologna Process, was very clear about the agenda of the Council of Europe in the Bologna Process:

From our side, there is a clear ideology behind this proposal. Much of the public debate on education focuses only on its economic functions, which are of course important, but the role of education is not limited to fostering economic development. For a human rights and democratic organisation, the role of education in developing a democratic culture is essential. The 2005 Council of Europe Summit in Warsaw for the first time referred to a democratic culture, which is the set of competencies and attitudes needed to make democratic institutions work in practice (Interview 2).

However, examining the further logic of communication and the context of meaning reveals that the ideational line does not emerge as very sharp or radical.

Defining public responsibility for higher education: an intense coordinative discursive activity within the Council of Europe

The call for public responsibility for higher education and research first became a prominent part of the Council of Europe's policies in the late 1990s and more intensively through the 2000s. In 2003, the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR) launched a project dedicated entirely to the issue of public responsibility. Aiming at involving governments, higher education institutions, as well as international organizations, the project comprised a number of discussions, a major conference organized in Strasbourg in 2004, and a series of publications, the most important being entitled "The Public responsibility for higher education and research" (Bergan and Weber 2005a).

It is to a great extent precisely at the conference in Strasbourg in 2004 that the process of creating the discourse took a decisive turn. One of the principle goals of the conference was to define the relationship between higher education, the public authorities and the *public good*. More precisely, the project was presented as aiming to define more narrowly the concept of

public responsibility. In the case of this conference, not only the texts were found important for this research project, but also the background and especially the pool of experts involved.

Namely, in her brilliant analysis of the Council of Europe's role in the Europeanisation of higher education, Susana Jorge de Melo (2013) found that the dominating experts at the conference were somehow already actively networked in the European level higher education policy processes, thus not new to the policy arena and the pertaining discursive action. On the other hand, the national representatives who were involved did not play a significant role in the project (Melo 2013, 87). A closer look at the documents and the expert papers published in the conference aftermaths reveal a case of the emergence of what Schmidt (2008, 310) described as the epistemic community in the coordinative sphere.

In the publication that followed the conference, the experts expressed their reflections on the relationship between the state and higher education and fitted it into the scope of the discussion on the public good and public responsibility. The editors of the publication, the key individuals (experts) in the epistemic community, argued:

> *Even if the nature and scope of the public responsibility for higher education differs slightly from one country to another according to their governmental, as well as political traditions and sensitivities, it is of utmost importance to higher education and research that we define what the state should do, and how it should do it, but also what it should not do. Lack of involvement as well as over-involvement, or badly conceived policies, will harm the sector. In particular, the fast changing environment requires a reappraisal of the nature and scope of the public responsibility for higher education and research as well as the instruments for exercising it* (Bergan and Weber, 2005b, 8).

This reasoning indicates the intensive effort to create a discourse that would reconcile the norms and values of the post-World-War II liberal democratic institutional setting with the emerging cognitive programmatic ideas that implied the private funding as a significant element of the higher education system. Seemingly the epistemic community around the Council of Europe tried to open the ground for accommodating the potentially incompatible but powerful ideas on their own ideational platform.

The argumentation was typically linked to the logic of necessity and obviously revolves around the postulate of the "fast changing environment". The changing environment is representing a sort of meta-problem under which particular problems can be ideated and defined. A typical

case of such particular problem is the ever present scarcity of public funds or in other words the problem of 'non-sustainability of free higher education'. The idea of the problem restricts the scope of solutions to the e.g. alternative funding policies or higher efficiencies. In this context the symbolically powerful notion of *public good* became a potential obstacle to the advancement of the cognitive ideas in the Bologna Process.

The above-quoted segment of the editors' foreword continues with the following claim:

> *Moreover, the use of the concept of "public good" without defining it precisely is confusing and could also have negative consequences on the sector if taken stricto sensu* (Bergan and Weber, 2005b, 8).

Thus, it appears that the coordinative discourse was steered towards defining the term *public responsibility* and its relation to the notion of *public good*, but with the somehow a-priori scepticism towards the use of the latter.

The issue of funding has been highly contentious across Europe, especially in the context of the institutional changes that implied the retreating of the state from providing public services (see Chapter 11). The stakes were also high because the funding discussion not only included funding for public, but also potential funding for private higher education institutions. On the other hand it included the funding of student support, that is, the question of whether – and how much – of a students' costs should be covered from private (individual) sources.

Thus, it is not surprising that funding is one of the most contentious issues within the concept of public responsibility. Weber wrote in his article for the post-conference publication:

> "*Does Europe have any chance of succeeding if it considers that higher education and research is a public good stricto sensu, as this implies that the production and financing of higher education and research should be exclusively – or nearly exclusively – the responsibility of the public sector? Most university leaders and economists would agree that the attainment of this ambitious objective would be greatly hampered if, according to a strict definition of the notion "public good", governments aimed to be even more present in the higher education and research system. Without neglecting the responsibilities of the public sector, it can be argued on the contrary that the public sector should reduce its degree of intervention and that higher educational institutions should have an entrepreneurial attitude in order to increase the effectiveness of the sector.*" (Weber 2005, 38).

The author typically discusses the points of view that stem from the great programmatic ideas that mark the transformation of the state and its role in providing public services (see Chapter 11.1). This also includes the reform of the university and financing models for higher education. The so created coordinative discourse is infused with the language of the *post-modern market-economistic* schools of thought and to a great extent corresponding to the ideas expressed in the discourse of the EU Commission (see Chapter 8.1).

This tendency was neither isolated, nor coincidental. For example, the pre-conference material included a script with the title "Are higher education and academic research a public good or of public responsibility" (Schoenenberger 2004). The script was a review of economic literature on the public good. Hence, the organisers attempted to frame the discussion on the notion and concept of public good into perspective and definitions of the selected theoretical approaches from the field of economics.

The contributors to the conference and the publication remained to a great extent locked into the economistic language and frames and thereby narrowed down the meaning and definition of public good to a mere technical term. In this way the notion of public good was stripped from its normative, historic and symbolic baggage. Moreover, in the document that followed the conference, the private resources, including tuition fees were accepted or at least mentioned and not opposed. Namely, in the "Recommendation addressed to public authorities in the States Party to the European Cultural convention and to the Bologna Follow-up Group"(hereafter Recommendation 2004) the terms *tuition fees* and its euphemism *cost-sharing* appeared as accepted and juxtaposed to the public funding, even though caution was called upon (CDESR 2004).

Beneath the argument of the necessity to be realistic regarding the public finances and thus freeing higher education from the notion of public good it is possible to interpret the effort to reconcile the regional socio-cultural nature of the Council of Europe with the EU economic project (Melo 2013, 108). The relatively intense internal deliberation indicates the urge to accommodate ideas that would not necessarily fit into the institutional background of the organisation. Re-imagining the role of the state appeared as the strongest ideational stream running beneath the efforts of constructing the discourse (Melo 2013, 86, 87, 92).

The legitimizing of the nascent discourse leaned substantially on the technique of gathering the necessary expertise. The involvement of experts, most of them belonging to an informal network or an epistemic community of European higher education policy, the CDESR tried to

build up the rational argument for the solution to the identified problems, thus generating and justifying the cognitive idea on how to organise (reform) higher education in line with modern cognitive ideas and general trends. The latter might have also been at odds with the norms and values that constitute the traditional institutional context of higher education in the "old" Europe and is to a certain extent symbolically represented in the concept of public good. Here it is possible to argue that the narrow circles of the epistemic community around the Council of Europe officials attempted to build arguments for adjusting the ideational platform of the Council of Europe on higher education in order to make it more acceptable to the 'spirit of the time'

Accepting the gradual abdication of the state from regulating higher education

The "Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research" (hereon Recommendation 2007) adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 May 2007 preceded the London summit of the Bologna process and proposed to the European policy arena a political formulation of the meaning of higher education (Council of Europe 2007). Because it was adopted by the Committee of Ministers, the Recommendation 2007 carried along with it a much higher political weight than the preceding documents. To a great extent it consecrated the previously elaborated and justified discourse and ideas.

When defining the responsibilities of public authorities, the Recommendation 2007 was very explicit on the withdrawal of the state from funding higher education. The public authorities should limit their regulatory competence to:

> – *exclusive responsibility for the framework within which higher education and research is conducted;*
> – *leading responsibility for ensuring effective equal opportunities to higher education for all citizens, as well as ensuring that basic research remains a public good;*
> – *substantial responsibility for financing higher education and research, the provision of higher education and research, as well as for stimulating and facilitating financing and provision by other sources within the framework developed by public authorities* (Council of Europe 2007).

The use of the sequence of "exclusive", "leading" and "substantial" is a very curious discursive style. The decreasing totality of the three terms leads the reader to the descending responsibility

of the public authorities over the chosen three dimensions of the regulation of higher education. This discursive strategy culminated in the call for system level reform in the direction of more private funding:

> *Public authorities should further establish a legal and policy framework to encourage institutions and staff to seek supplementary funding from other sources, including from the private sector* (Council of Europe 2007).

Thus, the Committee of Ministers uttered the idea of a partial state withdrawal from funding, or in other words the acceptance of private sources as a systemic solution for financing higher education. The message was consistent with the preceding and above-presented effort of the CDESR to remove the notion of public good from the definition and conceptualization of higher education. Thus, the coordinative venue of the Council of Europe came closer to the dominant ideas of the EU policy arena (see Chapter 8.1) and arguably guided by the seemingly inevitable global trends also to the shifting understanding of the nature of higher education in the context of the global reconfiguration of social forces and the pertaining changes in ideating higher education Chapter 11.2.

The Recommendation 2007 elaborates the role of the state in regulating higher education further by proposing concrete regulatory mechanisms.

> *Public authorities should assume the exclusive responsibility for the framework within which higher education and research are conducted. This should include the responsibility for:*
>
> *– the legal framework;*
> *– the degree structure or qualifications framework of the higher education system;*
> *– the framework for quality assurance;*
> *– the framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications;*
> *– the framework for information on higher education provision*
>
> (Council of Europe 2007).

Three out of five bullet points match the action lines of the Bologna Process. This tells us that the coordinative process within the Council of Europe has brought the ideation of higher education in tune with the ideational trends in the dominant platform for the coordination of a higher education policy at the European level. Thus, it is possible to discern a general tendency

to match the responsibilities attributed to public authorities with the ideas and action lines that by the mid-2000s will be consolidated in the coordinative sphere of the Bologna Process.

The common denominator of the above-outlined policy solutions can be interpreted as converging towards the idea of the withdrawal of the direct control of the state in favour of a higher degree of autonomy, contracting and output evaluation. This policy direction is one of the principal tenets of the grand programmatic idea on institutional and organisational rearrangements of the state and the public sector – the so called *new public management* (Olssen and Peters 2005) in line with the market dominated imaginaries and the re-configuration of historical structures presented in Chapter 11. For instance the quality assurance system can be viewed as a typical regulatory solution whereby the state withdraws from the direct management of higher education, but establishes a buffer mechanism to evaluate the performance of the providers of education:

> *The importance of quality assurance, which is the joint responsibility of public authorities and higher education institutions, grows with increasing degrees of institutional autonomy. Public authorities should establish, as an essential regulatory mechanism in diversified higher education systems, cost-effective quality assessment mechanisms that are built on trust, give due regard to internal quality development processes, allow for independent decision-making, and abide by agreed-upon principles* (Council of Europe 2007).

In this segment of the Recommendation 2007 it is possible to discern a similar programmatic ideational tendency as in the case of the documents of the EU Commission. The Council of Europe took over the discursive regularities such as re-contextualised autonomy and independent decision-making. The universities are supposed to follow their own strategic orientation with the "cost-effective" technology of assuring quality based on self-induced criteria and the external evaluation of the success in their fulfilment. The universities are seen in the process of detachment from the governmental micro management.

The path to the new public management as the guiding principle of the regulatory arrangements in higher education had been prepared through a long process revolving around the project on public responsibility for higher education. The typically coordinative discourse had been created through a relatively long and intense coordination process of legitimising the proposition of cognitive ideas on how to reform higher education and why this is so necessary (Melo 2013, 87). In both the above-presented Recommendations (2004 and 2007) it was

possible to discern the effort of the above-identified epistemic community to actively contribute to the creation and justification of a discourse that arguably aimed at normalising the emerging ideas on higher education, based on competition and new public management.

However, the two recommendations differed from each other in one curious detail. While the Recommendation 2004 refers to the EU promoted programmatic idea (hegemonic imaginary) of the Knowledge economy by using the term Europe of Knowledge and the discursive regularity of employability and flexibility on the labour market, the Recommendation 2007 does not contain direct reference to the hegemonic imaginary so much promoted by the European Commission.

5.3 Counter-balancing the emphasis on the economic purpose of higher education in the Bologna Process

The explanation for the discursive deviation from the Knowledge Economy imaginary is perhaps best found by interpreting the Council of Europe's role in the coordinative process of the Bologna Process. The analysis of the discourse, the ideas, the actors and the institutional background of the Bologna Process (Chapter 4) revealed an intense political action and the confrontation of the contending ideas on higher education. From the early involvement in Bologna, the representatives of the Council of Europe found themselves in the role of promoters of higher education as something more than just an instrument for economic competitiveness or a mere commodity on the global market of services. This position in the configuration of actors in the Bologna Process demanded an active involvement in formulating the texts of the documents that were generated in the coordinative sphere of the Bologna structures.

The analysed discourse and discursive interaction in Chapter 4 revealed a permanent confrontation between various streams of ideas which confirm the discursive and ideational animosity within the Bologna process and supports the interpretation of Bologna as the policy arena of regional scope where various levels of ideas, institutional contexts and discursive strategies meet, confront each other, match or clash. On this note it is possible to argue that the following section from the Bergen communiqué is typically reflecting the outcome of the negotiations of various actors during the preparatory and drafting phase:

We must cherish our rich heritage and cultural diversity in contributing to a knowledge-based society. We commit ourselves to upholding the principle of public responsibility for higher education in the context of complex modern societies. As higher education is situated at the crossroads of research, education and innovation, it is also the key to Europe's competitiveness (Bergen communiqué 2005).

The paragraph reveals a very strong presence of the programmatic idea of the economic instrumentalisation of higher education - "knowledge-based society" - in pursuit of "Europe's competitiveness". The nexus between "research, education and innovation" – the so called *triangle of knowledge* reflects the discursive regularity of the EU Commission documents. On the other hand, it is possible to discern the antagonistic discursive regularities. The economic discourse is counterbalanced with the reference to "the public responsibility" and to "reach heritage and cultural diversity" - the dimensions of Europe that transcend the mere economic one and reflect the European normative ideational background.

In the Bergen communiqué the power of the economic instrumentalist ideation of higher education (aligned with the EU Commission discourse) was already well established. The rise of the economic discourse within Bologna matched with the intensification of coordination within the Council of Europe. It is probably not a coincidence that the term public good did not appear next to public responsibility in the Bergen communiqué – a year after the Recommendation 2004 was adopted by the CDESR and whereby the notion of public good was relativized by the experts and the epistemic community. The epistemic community that marked the discussion in the Council of Europe extended well into the coordinative venue of the Bologna Process and can be to a certain extent deemed to also be part of the larger epistemic community that formed in the Bologna policy arena. The coordinative activity led to the compromises negotiated and reached behind the scenes.

5.4 The purposes of higher education

One of the compromises that marked the coordinative discourse of the Bologna process originated in the coordinative activity of the Council of Europe. Arguably the Recommendation of 2007 resulted in a sort of fresh approach to antagonising the economic instrumentalisation ideational stream in the Bologna Process. Namely, with the political

legitimacy of the Recommendation 2007, the Council of Europe brought into the Bologna Process the definition of higher education through four main purposes:

    – *preparation for sustainable employment;*
    – *preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;*
    – *personal development;*
    – *the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a*
    broad, advanced knowledge base (Council of Europe 2007).

The multipurpose conceptualisation of higher education had appeared in previous documents too, but it was only in the Recommendation 2007 it reached the momentum to become the central element in the discursive strategy of the Council of Europe's communication and coordination discourses. The four bullet points appear as aiming at the reconciliation of the economic instrumentalism with the broader cultural and democratic normative platform associated with the liberal welfare Europe of the post-World War II period.

If put in the context of the Council of Europe's political action within the Bologna Process, the four purposes can be interpreted as the discursive attempt to extend the economic reductionism to a more comprehensive ideation of higher education. Within the coordinative policy arena of the Bologna Process, the four purposes turned out to be the spearheading adversary discursive regularity to the economic instrumentalism of the Knowledge society/economy policy imaginary. As shown above with the claim of the interviewed official, the Council of Europe did not hide its aim of containing the excessive economisation of the higher education policy within the Bologna Process's coordinative discourse.

The four purposes were politicised and mobilised for strategic ends in a relatively open confrontation of ideas and actors. In this configuration of coordinative activity the Council of Europe was also othering the EU policy ideas. The normative appeal to Europe as something larger than the EU and presenting the socio-cultural identity as something above the economic project, challenged the supremacy of the EU Lisbon agenda in the Bologna Process (Interview 2 and 3). The economic regionalism of the EU was opposed by the normative idea of socio-cultural regionalism and the democratisation project (Melo 2013, 106).

In the same year, shortly after the Recommendation 2007 was adopted, the European ministers responsible for higher education met for their biannual summit in London and adopted the

following formulation linking the notion of *public responsibility* to the four purposes of higher education:

[...] Our [the ministers'] aim is to ensure that our higher education institutions have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. Those purposes include: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and stimulating research and innovation (London communiqué 2007).

The four purposes were not just copied into the communiqué as they were formulated in the Council of Europe's coordinative sphere of discourse. The alteration of the original formulation of four purposes, as per the Recommendation 2007 reflects the coordination and the subsequent rework of the formulations that were going on behind the scenes of the preparation for the ministerial summit. However, despite explicit questions on why the formulation in the London communiqué did not correspond exactly to the original proposal of the Council of Europe, none of the interviewees were able to give answers.

The return of the old normative ideas into the discourse of the Council of Europe

The coordinative process and the discursive positioning of the Council of Europe was not over in 2007. In the following years, the concerns, the discursive action and the content of ideas converged back to what earlier in this chapter was presented as the traditional European ideation of higher education.

Susana Jorge de Melo concluded in her thesis that the Council of Europe advocated market reforms but also proposed a far-reaching state intervention in keeping the overview and responsibility for the equity and framework (Melo 2013, 108). According to the findings of this study her conclusions only partially explain the complex course of the Council of Europe's ideational positioning. She argued about the close connection between the course of the Council of Europe's political position and the evolution of the Bologna Process. However, the coordinative discourse of this organisation was neither linear and nor one-directional.

If the Recommendation 2004, the Europe of Knowledge was mentioned, this was not so in the Recommendation 2007. In 2012, another recommendation was adopted which indicated the trend of strengthening the normative component of the discourse on the expense of the cognitive ideas on the necessary withdrawal of the state and the private funding. The "Recommendation

of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the responsibility of public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy" (hereafter Recommendation 2012) indicated the return of the Council of Europe to their loyalty to the old institutional context and the normative/traditional European ideation of university (Council of Europe 2012).

The title itself combines the concept of autonomy with academic freedom, which is not typical for the modern discourses of the managerial autonomy of the universities:

> *Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are essential values of higher education, and they serve the common good of democratic societies. They are, nevertheless, not absolute, and rely on a balance which can only be provided through deliberation and consultations involving public authorities, higher educational institutions, the academic community of staff and students and all other stakeholders* (Council of Europe 2012).

The discourse invokes the norms and values pertaining to the institutional context of the liberal humanist and welfare state blend of ideation of university (see Chapter 10). The idea of public good as defined earlier in this chapter creeps back into the discourse although not marked with the same term. It is somehow balanced in the following sentence with calling for the external "stakeholders" to be involved in the "deliberation and consultation" on academic freedom. This can be associated with the argumentative regularity of the responsibility of higher education towards society that exists throughout the documents trail. In Recommendation 2007 the text referred to the "dual implication of public responsibility" (Council of Europe 2007). According to the formulation within it:

> *The public responsibility **for** higher education and research is complemented by the public responsibility **of** higher education and research, exercised by its institutions, bodies, students and staff* (Council of Europe 2007).

Seemingly the Recommendation 2012 discourse reiterated the previously incorporated idea of "stakeholders" community involvement in the governance and steering of higher education in order to assure a certain responsiveness of the university to the social context. However, at the same time the reference to the concept like a collegial type of inner organisation and disinterested research:

> *Public authorities and other stakeholders in higher education governance structures and mechanisms should respect the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The development and use of knowledge should be independent of particular*

political, economic, social or other interests. Public authorities should encourage the
creation of a collegial environment of respect and a feeling of mutual ownership, with
due respect to the leading role of the institutions (Council of Europe 2012).

This message is even more interesting in the context of the coordinative sphere of the Bologna Process and the role of the Council of Europe throughout the interactive process of discourse. From the paragraph above it is possible to discern the idea of *development and use of knowledge* as being free from external pressures and not exposed to economic instrumentalisation. Seemingly the antagonizing of economic instrumentalism was radicalized to the point that it became the strategic priority also within the Council of Europe and not only when the Council of Europe entered the discursive interaction within the Bologna policy arena.

But on the other hand the idea on private funds and the managerial autonomy remains an integral part of the same discourse and thereby its hybrid (reconciliatory) nature is maintained:

Public authorities should have a considerable responsibility for financing and improving
access to higher education and research; the financing and provision of resources by
other sources should also be encouraged and facilitated within the framework developed
by public authorities. Regardless of the sources of financial income, higher education
institutions should be in a position to allocate and manage their funds in line with the
priorities established by their governance bodies, in accordance with the legal provisions
and the regulatory framework as set by the public authorities (Council of Europe 2012).

It seems that eventually the coordinative activity in this forum has pulled the discourse towards co-opting with the general trend of cognitive policy ideas whereby higher education would need more financial support, including from private sources. These directions can be found in a number of influential policy scripts articulated in organizations like OECD, the EU and other influential venues of articulating discourses. Hence the Council of Europe succumbed to the argument of the necessity for more private funding. In this imaginary the policy idea of private funding of higher education would be easily justified/legitimized (Chapter 8.1, Serrano-Velarde 2011, 9).

With the reconciliatory position regarding private funding, the Council of Europe discourse loosened the institutional strings and returned to the above-discerned general ideas on the role and organization of the public sector (Chapter 11) pertaining to the global shifts of social forces and that represent a discontinuity in the ideation of higher education. In fact, in part III of this

dissertation I argue that funding higher education is the policy segment where the economic instrumentalisation of higher education and commodification of higher education overlap/match (see Chapter 13).

From the discursive regularities it is also possible to conclude that the idea of reorganizing the relationship between the state and universities in the direction of deregulation, managerial autonomy and private funding was also largely accommodated by the Council of Europe. However, when interacting in the Bologna Process it moves to the fringes and becomes a sort of residual sub-discourse. Meanwhile, the old institutional context reflected in the idea of university as a collegial institution, free from external pressure and autonomous in its creativity emerges as the model of reference. The substantive content of ideas and the discourse are contingent to the meaning of the context in which they are uttered.

5.5 The significance of the public good and public responsibility for this study

Already in Chapter 4 the discursive and ideational relevance of the notion of public good and public responsibility were presented and discussed. The meaning of the context of these terms is clearly rooted in the European welfare state and the liberal-humanist ideas of the Western world – thus the normative and value base of the "old" Europe (see Chapter 10). In the Bologna Process arena these ideas represent the stream of resistance towards the excessive economic instrumentalism in ideating higher education. In the interactive process of discourse the two notions were also conceptualised as the counterbalance to the larger ideational trends that view higher education as part of a larger revision of the public sector with the considerable use of elements of the post-modern market based schools of thought.

The research on the origins and archaeology of these discursive regularities in the Bologna coordinative discourse inevitably brings a researcher to the Council of Europe as a discursive venue and a coordinative (policy) arena for the discursive interaction on higher education.

The findings also fuel the argument about the agency. The actors involved in the coordinative process used the discourse strategically. They appeared conscious of an ideational background and skilled in the use of discourse. Most outstandingly, the logic of communication suggested that in the early 2000s a lot of effort was dedicated into removing the term public good from

the coordinative sphere of the Bologna Process. The involved individuals were loosely connected in a network of experts and civil servants and were also active in other policy/coordinative fora (like e.g. the Bologna follow-up structures). Thus, it was possible to discern a sort of pan-European epistemic community for higher education.

The Council of Europe eventually developed a sort of a *hybrid discourse* that seems aiming at reconciling the traditional normative ideas with modern trends, cognitive ideas and imaginaries. The appeals to the traditions and values were strong, but there is also the outstanding presence of the appeal to the necessity of new (pragmatic) solutions, especially when it comes to funding (thereby assuming the problem of the scarce availability of funds as given). In other words, the ideational rules that emerged from the analysis indicate the strong presence of norms of the old European institutional setting, but on the other hand it is possible to observe an implicit/tacit co-opting with the logic of necessity - thus accepting the post-modern global market oriented and economistic (cognitive) policy ideas. The old norms are presented as due caution when proceeding with the inevitable modern reforms and thereby form a hybrid discourse. This evolution and change is theorised in Chapters 10 and 11 of Part III.

The somehow mid-way reconciliatory (hybrid) discursive strategy nevertheless tells us about the discursive drift towards the seemingly very powerful dominant policy imaginaries of the day, especially the ones denoted as new public management and a market-driven provision of higher education (see Chapter 11). The same discourse also reflects a certain degree of organised effort in the direction of the normalisation of the policy ideas that could be at odds with the traditional European normative (institutional) order.

However, despite this tendency to give in to the modern imaginaries and ideas, this study has revealed how the Council of Europe's discursive positioning in the Bologna process played out in a curious way. Because of its reconciliatory hybrid coordinative discourse it would be expectable that in the Bologna forum the Council of Europe would give in to the dominant economic imaginaries of higher education, but this did not occur. Quite the opposite; the definitions, concepts and argumentative devices used in the coordinative discourse within the Bologna policy arena functioned as containment to (or counterbalancing of) the proliferation of the Lisbon agenda and the pertaining discourse whereby the economic role of higher education dominates over the others. The case of the Council of Europe reflects the dynamic nature of discourse in relation to the meaning context. While reading the documents of the Council of

Europe alone brings across one interpretation of ideas, its role in the Bologna process reveals a different ideational standpoint.

It is precisely the analysis of this process (the pertaining ideational rules and discursive regularities) that makes it possible to observe how the institutions are not only structures but also constructed and changed by the agents with their foreground discursive and background ideational abilities as defined in the discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008, 316). In this fashion, the Council of Europe appears both as a coordinative venue of discourse by itself and as an agent within the Bologna coordinative venue.

Defining the ideation of higher education in terms of its purposes in modern European society, represented the crucial political contribution of the Council of Europe to Bologna. Namely, the public responsibility for the full range of purposes of higher education turned out to be the spearheading discursive instrument in the clash of ideas within the Bologna coordinative discourse. It became a common denominator for defining higher education in modern Europe. On one hand it reconciled the economic (instrumental) with other purposes of higher education, but when engaged in political action, it became a powerful strategic weapon on the discursive battlefield against the monopoly of economistic discourse on higher education. Hence, in discursive action - when confronted with other actors and ideas - the Council of Europe positioned its discourse as an adversary to the ideas that were also accepted to a certain degree in its own political documents. The collected data indicate that in 2012 the Council of Europe discourse seemingly back to a less compromising defence of the old western liberal-humanist ideation of university, but the trend is clear – there is a profound change in the institutional background going on in the European scale, and it changes the fundamental aspects of the ideation of higher education.

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The concept of public responsibility and the attribution of a broad range of purposes to higher education were part of the broader ideational stream leaning on the 'old' European institutional background. In the next chapter I went further in researching the origins and the meaning context of the notions and concepts that appeared as significant discursive regularities and that represented the dominant ideational rules in the European higher education policy arena. The social dimension of higher education was identified as one of such elements.

6. *Social dimension* – bringing the ideas of the European welfare state back into the Bologna discourse

In the previous section I presented how the Council of Europe and the likeminded bloc engaged in the interactive process of discourse mainly through the discursive concepts of *public responsibility* and also through the definition of the scope of the purposes of higher education eventually written into the London Communiqué of 2007. The interpretation of the discursive regularities in the case of the Council of Europe's political engagement in the Bologna Process revealed a set of ideational rules suggesting a consistent ideational stream in confronting other ideas in the coordinative sphere of discursive interaction. The discourse was appealing to the values and norms of the post-World War II Western society and developed as a sort of anti-identity to the programmatic ideas of higher education as an instrument for regional competitiveness.

This ideational stream was supported by another discursive regularity – the *social dimension* of higher education. According to the interviewees (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), this was a constantly developing concept that considerably marked the first six years of the coordinative sphere of the Bologna Process. The promotion of the use of the social dimension can also be associated with specific actors (e.g. ESIB – the representative organisation of European students) and was discussed in a number of events and fora within the structure and practice of the Bologna Process. Similarly to *public good*, *public responsibility* and the *multipurpose definition of higher education* it can be interpreted as the key element of a discursive strategy in the confrontation of ideas on higher education. This is why I also dedicated some attention to this discursive element and searched for the regularities that would contribute to the interpretation of the ideations of higher education in modern Europe.

The social dimension came into Bologna with the students

The first reference to the social dimension of higher education came into the official documents at the Prague ministerial meeting (2001)[22]. Under the sub-heading "Higher education institution and students", the ministers agreed that:

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[22] In the Bologna declaration (1999) the term social dimension was used in relation to Europe and not to higher education, therefore I considered its first mention only in Prague (2001).

[...] *students should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other educational institutions. Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by the students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna Process* (Prague Communiqué 2001).

The context and the location in the text of the Prague Communiqué suggest that the student representatives played a crucial role in bringing the notion of social dimension into the Bologna Process. The paragraph was dedicated to the role of students in higher educational institutions' governance structures. Seemingly, the social dimension appears almost as an appendix in the very last sentence of the paragraph. In the same document the social dimension is mentioned again in the context of mobility. It is marking the concerns for equal access to mobility as a costly practice promoted by the Bologna Process. However, in the Prague communiqué it is difficult to talk about social dimension as a self-standing concept. It is still ill-defined and thereby weak in its discursive role.

6.1 Discursive positioning and concretisation of the *social dimension*

In the years that followed its first mention, the social dimension attracted quite some attention, including two special events dedicated specifically to discussing and defining it. One was the Bologna follow-up seminar entitled "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area" (Neetens 2003). The seminar was organised during the Greek presidency of the EU. The European student representatives (ESIB) cooperated closely with the Greeks and contributed the Rapporteur of the event who was in charge to write a report for the whole Bologna forum with the view of preparing the Berlin Communiqué.

The content was focused on three main issues, identified as challenges for the construction of the European Higher Education Area: 1. social dimension*;* 2. higher education as a public good; and 3. higher education in the GATS negotiations. The proponents of the seminar saw these three topics as interconnected and ideated them as indicators of the problems that needed policy solutions in the overall programmatic project – the European Higher Education Area. From the seminar's report (Neetens 2003) and the conclusions (BFUG 2003) it is possible to interpret that the meaning attributed to social dimension was mainly contextualised in solidarity and the egalitarian values of the post-war Europe:

Appropriate studying and living conditions should be ensured for the students so that they can finalise successfully their studies in time without being prevented by obstacles related to their social and economic background. In this context, it is necessary to introduce and maintain social support schemes for students, including grants, portable as far as possible, loan schemes, health care and insurance, housing and academic and social counselling (BFUG 2003).

Thus, *social dimension* in conjunction with *public good* became the marker of the concerns for access and support for successful study with the primary focus on socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

This definition was then politically consecrated also the Berlin communique that followed the Athens seminar. It was explained as "the social characteristics of European Higher Education Area" consisting of *social cohesion* and *social and gender equality* as aims (see the quoted text below). With these two concrete examples the social dimension is for the first time concretised in a ministerial document (Kladis 2006).

The so conceptualised social dimension gained momentum as it was discursively engaged. As in the cases of other concepts and discourses analysed in this study, once it entered the discursive interaction in the Bologna coordinative arena, it assumed a particular role. The Social dimension was used in the discursive strategy in the coordinative activities leading to the Berlin Communiqué (2003). In the Communiqué it is possible to observe how various discursive regularities referring to the egalitarian and welfare state norms are blended into one and engaged in the confrontation with adversary discourses - the latter being the economic instrumentalism or imagining higher education as a tradable service (Chapters 4 and 7).

One can observe this phenomenon by comparing the discourses and singling out the shifting combinations of discourses within the text. Namely, the run up to the adoption of the Berlin Communiqué was one of the most vivid moments of the discursive interaction within the Bologna policy arena (Chapter 7.2). The final communiqué became a typical example of a coordinative discourse. It was the outcome of the bargaining and negotiation in the policy arena and it reflected it well. The analysis showed how the ideas tried to balance each other as a result of the coordinated agreement between the actors. One of the exemplar paragraphs of the negotiated balance of discourses and ideas is the following:

*Ministers reaffirm the importance of the **social dimension** of the Bologna Process. The need to increase **competitiveness** must be balanced with the objective of improving the **social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area**, aiming at strengthening **social cohesion** and **reducing social and gender inequalities** both at the national and at the European level. In that context, Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a **public good** and a **public responsibility**. They emphasize that in international academic cooperation and exchanges, academic values should prevail* (Berlin Communiqué 2003).

In this paragraph the *social dimension* is clearly positioned as an adversary concept to the *competitiveness* which in turn is recognised as an (inevitable) necessity. Hence the appeal to the social purpose of higher education and (arguably) egalitarian values is counterbalancing the cognitive idea of economic instrumentalism. Further on in the same paragraph the *public good* is used in a sort of normative 'preamble' sentence followed by the famous sentence opposing trade in higher education and GATS (see Chapter 7 for detailed analysis of this discursive element). Thus, the *social dimension* is conceptualised as the 'other' dimension, counterbalancing the economic (competitiveness) dimension of higher education. At the same time the *public good* and *academic values* complement *social dimension* in a sort of broader level of discursive struggle: antagonising the commodification of higher education.

6.2 From the counterbalancing of discourses to the reconciliation of the adversary ideas

In the communiqués following Berlin, the social dimension was defined further and ever more in the technical (policy) details. It was associated with the policy measures aiming at student support, especially for those from disadvantaged social backgrounds. The definition was anchored in discursive elements such as *social cohesion*, *reducing inequalities*, and *widening participation*. The basic message was the call for assuring access and successful completion of studies regardless of the social and economic background of the students. Egalitarian values and the principle of solidarity represented the normative background informing the actors in their discursive agency.

In the Bergen communiqué (2005) the social dimension became a separate heading, thereby gaining the status of a self-standing issue and not just a reference. The status of the "constituent element of the European Higher education area" was also attributed to it in the second special seminar within the Bologna structures dedicated to this issue held in Paris in January 2005 (BFUG 2005, Stasna 2005). It was not a surprise that the French government volunteered to host the seminar. As presented in Chapter 7, its action was considerably conditioned by the domestic institutional context and it actively opposed the trade principles in higher education. This seminar indicated the increasing necessity to further define the term social dimension and sharpen its role in the coordinative confrontation of ideas in the Bologna coordinative discourse (Kladis 2006).

The key note of the Paris seminar was a discussion on reconciliation between *competitiveness* and the *social dimension* (Kladis 2006). Thus, similarly to the attempt of the Council of Europe in the case of the seminars on *public responsibility*, the participants (civil servants, experts, international organisations officials and transnational civil society representatives) of this Bologna related event also tried to coordinate an agreement about the coexistence between contending ideational streams. A considerable number of the epistemic community identified in Chapter 5 were also present at this event[23].

In the official recommendations from this seminar the participants repeated the positioning and discursive role of the social dimension from the Berlin communiqué, thus as a "counterbalance to the need to increase Europe's competitiveness", and in the same sentence they causally related it to the "attractiveness in the world-wide competition" (BFUG 2005). The coordinative process eventually brought about a reconciliation of the two ideational streams in the discursive formulation that conceptualised one ideation as a prerequisite for the objectives of the other. In other words, the social dimension was portrayed as the prerequisite for the competitiveness, and thereby discursively replaced the orthodox economistic instrumental subjugation of higher education to the economic competitiveness. This inter-discursive construction also appeared in the Bergen Communiqué:

> *The social dimension of the Bologna Process is a constituent part of the European Higher Education Area and a necessary condition for the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area* (Bergen communiqué 2005).

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[23] This claim is underpinned by the presence of the author/researcher at this event.

Hence it is possible to interpret the fusion of the two discourses as a result of the search for the coexistence of two ideas (ideational streams) that these discourses represented.

Where various antagonistic concepts are combined into one text, as was the case here, there is a more complex process going on than just counterbalancing. It is possible to argue that the merger of two discourses indicates the intense coordinative discursive activity between participants acting with different *background ideational abilities* and notably *foreground discursive abilities*. The agency can be interpreted in the efforts to adjust the substantial content of the discourse with a view to avoid the confrontations or conflicts in the further political processes in the coordinative sphere of the discourse. This resulted in moderating the orthodoxy of presenting higher education as an instrument for the economic growth by introducing the normative considerations informed by the traditional European institutional background and the pertaining normative ideas on *equality* and *solidarity*.

However, the policy imaginary of the knowledge economy remained present in the hybrid constructions defining and attributing meaning to the concept of *social dimension* in the following years of the Bologna Process. In London (2007), the chapter on the social dimension was infused with the re-contextualised concepts from the knowledge society/economy communicative discourse:

> *Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. The policy should therefore aim to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society* (London Communiqué 2007).

In this hybridised discourse, it is possible to discern the discursive attempt to somehow re-define the discourse of the knowledge economy and society. The ideational rules that transpire from this endeavour can be compared to what Jessop (2008) called the theoretical paradigm of "a democratic knowledge-based society" as opposed to the "competitive knowledge economy". The two conceptualisations have common roots but became distorted on their way to the policy world till becoming the strategic discursive devices to promote a wide range of policies (Jessop 2008, 19, Chapter 12).

However, the emphasis on the need to work on individuals in order to maximise their potential transpires from the above paragraph. Reducing inequalities is balanced with raising the level of

knowledge, skills and competences in society. The similarity to the EU Lisbon Strategy discourse is enhanced by the re-contextualisation of the emblematic Lisbon flag concept of *social cohesion*. By 2007, it was clear that there is an asymmetry between the ideational streams on the two sides of the counterbalancing scale. The programmatic ideas on higher education in the knowledge economy under the patronage of the EU Commission gained momentum as the Bologna Process progressed. The adversary ideas gradually gave in and retrenched to the peripheral position or even contributed to legitimising the economic discourse towards the normalisation of the grand idea of engaging higher education with the economic strategies. The social dimension was to a certain degree absorbed by the power of the knowledge economy by the hybrid discourse, where the latter ideational accent prevails.

6.3 European students and the social dimension of higher education

A thorough analysis of the discursive dynamics within the organisation of students that participated in the Bologna Process reveals a strikingly similar tendency. In this section I will briefly present the student involvement in the Bologna Process and its close tie with the discursive development of the concept of the *social dimension*. The section is also dedicated to the student representative organisation as the case of a transnational civil society driven by the Europeanisation of higher education policies and the transnational nature of the reconfiguration of social forces.

The student representatives have promoted the social dimension as their priority ever since they were accepted as official partners of the Bologna Process (Interviews 1 and 5). The association of ESIB – the National Unions of Students in Europe, later renamed the European Students' Union[24], has been the official representative of students at the Bologna table since the Prague meeting in 2001. Today's European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organization of 47 national unions of students from 39 countries (December 2012). The organisation's official website states that the member unions are open to all students in their respective countries and are student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles. The aim of the ESU is to "represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the

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[24] http://www.esu-online.org/about/aboutus/ (16.6.2014)

European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, the ESU represents over 11 million students in Europe".[25]

The arguments and flag words that ESIB/ESU consistently used were all converging on the ideation of higher education as an emancipating mechanism for the disadvantaged groups. As opposed to the mechanism of the reproduction of elites, the ESU imagines higher education as the mechanism for social emancipation:

> *Today, purely self-sustaining and replicating higher education can no longer function, due in part to a greatly increased student population as well as a change in the needs of society. This can be seen as part of the long-term transformation of higher education away from a tool for the elite to enable future generations of the elite to retain power* (ESU 2013).

In this section it is possible to trace the discursive acknowledgment of the expanded (mass) higher education as a substantial shift in the nature of higher education and the attribution of the *social mobility* rationale behind this transformation. The argument is anchored in the appropriateness logic; hence it is possible to argue that the ESU embarked on a normative interpretation of the expansion and/or massification of higher education. Or if seen from another angle, it is possible to also talk about the *democratisation* of higher education (see Chapter 10)

The ideation of higher education as the mechanism for emancipation was closely linked to the normative discourse rooted in the concepts of solidarity and equality and invoking the European values. In the 2004 policy paper dedicated to the students' view on higher education in the context of the EU Lisbon strategy it was stated that the:

> […] *ESIB calls for a prioritization of the social and sustainable aspects of the envisaged economic growth. It only respecting the above mentioned humanistic values that can provide a secure basis to foster successful economic growth. In this context, the legacy of the welfare state, which is rooted in European tradition, should be preserved and developed further to the benefit of all* (ESIB 2004).

In the above section it is also possible to discern the intertextuality, or the attempt to reconcile the economic discourse with the normative ideas of post-World War II Europe. Similarly to what was observed in Bologna (above) and to what Serrano-Velarde (2011) found in the EU

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[25] From here on I will refer to this organization with both acronyms (ESIB/ESU)

strategic use of the public benefits and equity discourse in combination with the competitiveness and economic paradigm (Serrano-Velarde 2011, 9), the hybridisation of discourse seems to be a common discursive technology when there is a need for reconciling ideational streams or when the cognitive ideas need to soften the clash with the established institutional context (especially in terms of norms and values).

In the same document the students set up the argument based on calculus whereby the inclusive higher education would ultimately benefit society and the economic growth:

In view of the role and goals of higher education, it should be possible for all social groups to contribute to social and economic development strategies. Therefore, measures to guarantee equality in the access to, progress and success in higher education should be undertaken. An increase in educational attainment levels is of vital importance as a factor of growth. Society benefits from the essential and valuable returns of higher education, both in social and economic terms (ESIB 2004).

Their argumentative regularity revolved around the necessity to assure the equal access, progression and completion of studies in order to squeeze the full potential from higher education. The public funding of higher education was repeatedly portrayed as a strategic investment - a rational choice that the governments should follow in order to boost the prosperity of society. Therein it is possible to interpret the economistic language and calculus-based discursive inclination:

Higher education is, in the simplest terms, a strategic investment for any state, while primarily it is a human right. As such, it must be seen as a long-term investment of society and for the good of all society, whose benefits repay society many times over if it is sustained and stable (ESU 2012).

However, in this section from 2012 it is possible to observe the shift of discursive strategy. While in the early 2000s, the ESIB/ESU's strategy formed itself as a response and a counterbalance to the Lisbon strategy of the EU, in the late 2000s, the discourse seemed to turn more neutral. In all cases however, the imaginary of a Knowledge economy/society was accepted and re-contextualised with the complement of the normative ideas stemming from the humanist tradition and solidarity.

Despite the tendency to accept the hegemonic programmatic idea (imaginary) of a knowledge economy and the pertaining competitiveness discourse, the ESIB/ESU policy documents more

or less consistently reject the tuition fees and the commodification of higher education. In the following section of their policy paper dedicated to the commodification of higher education they meticulously presented the nature of the large scale transformation of higher education with a clear normative discursive style:

In this context, Higher Education (HE) is perceived as a knowledge industry and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as service providers. Students are looked upon primarily as consumers of education and human capital for the labour market. They tend to focus less on the active participation in higher education institutions. Many are choosing to focus only on the preparation for the labour market and the possibilities for maximising personal financial returns upon graduation, which is a negative and one-sided approach. This has also led to a decrease in cooperation and solidarity between individual students and an increase in unhealthy competition for the purpose of the fulfilment of personal aims (ESIB 2005).

What is particularly interesting for this dissertation in the above section is the intertwining of two dominant ideational streams that I heuristically described in Chapter 4 as happening on two separate discursive planes: the economic instrumentalisation and the commodification of higher education. Namely the output of human capital can be classified into the ideational stream viewing higher education as an instrument for economic success, while treating the higher education institutions as service providers can be viewed as part of higher education as a tradable service paradigm.

6.4 Social dimension and the hybrid discourse in the EU documents

Even though the EU is the venue where the idea of the economic instrumentalisation of higher education has been nesting and nourished, and where the policy imaginary of a knowledge economy represented the ideational and discursive umbrella for the regionalisation of higher education (see Chapter 8.1), the EU did not remain immune to other ideas and discourses in the European higher education policy arena. In the process of *discursive hybridisation* the discourse was filled with hybrid constructions from different ideational contents (Serrano-Velarde 2011, 9). The normative ideas, stemming from the European welfare state institutional background, have been somehow present in the EU Commission's discourse, but from the inverted

perspective if compared to the ESIB/ESU and the Council of Europe. In 2013, the Council of the EU took over the Bologna Process discourse in its "Conclusions on the social dimension of higher education" (Council of the EU 2013).

Already the choice to use the concept of *social dimension* in the title indicates the choice of re-contextualising the key Bologna concept into its own discursive strategy. In the body of the text the Bologna Process is mentioned several times, including when taking over the definitions and goals. For example, identically to the Bologna hybrid discourse, and also in the Council text, the care for disadvantaged groups represents the core of the meaning of a social dimension. In this respect the Council of the EU calls for action towards one of the Bologna concrete objectives in the social dimension of higher education:

> […] *to progressing towards the Bologna Process goal that the student body entering, participating in and completing a higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of the Member States' populations* (Council of the EU 2013).

The objective of matching the structure of society with the social structure of students was adopted by the Bologna ministers in London and reiterated in Bucharest five years later (London communiqué 2007; Bucharest communiqué 2012) and represented an effort to de-mystify the social dimension. Thereby the policy goals were defined, calling for concrete policy measures/action to be taken.

However, the EU's effort to reconcile the economic instrumentalisation of higher education with the normative ideas on the social purposes of higher education resulted in a considerably stronger asymmetry than what I interpreted from the hybrid discourse in the ESIB/ESU documents. In line with what was argued and concluded in Chapter 8.1, also in the case of the Council's document on the social dimension, the economic instrumental view of higher education can be interpreted as far superior to the rival discourses, even though incorporated in it. The Council of the EU to a great extent followed the discourse and ideas brought forward by the EU Commission, both in the Bologna coordinative discourse and in the communicative discourse of the public documents released in the last decade (see Chapter 8.2). It is perhaps not a big stretch of the imagination to interpret the similarities between the formulations of the Council of the EU and the Council of Europe's definition of higher education purposes.

The central discursive attempt to reconcile the calls for a social Europe with a competitiveness agenda is perhaps the following formulation:

Europe's economic recovery and its drive for sustainable growth, including through enhanced research and innovation, are increasingly dependent on its capacity to develop the skills of all its citizens, demonstrating the interdependence of social and economic objectives. In parallel with efforts to improve skills through vocational education and training, high-quality higher education and lifelong learning also have a crucial role to play in enhancing employability and increasing competitiveness, while at the same time promoting the personal and professional development of students and graduates, and stimulating social solidarity and civic engagement (Council of the EU 2013).

If in the discourse of the ESU the argument runs in the direction of social dimension as a prerequisite for economic success, in this paragraph, the Council of the EU inverts the causality and ideates the economic success and employability as a prerequisite for social dimension. Hence, in the comparative perspective it is possible to interpret a relatively clear ideational stand by the ministers within the EU coordinative arena. The economic imaginary of a knowledge economy that would lead to greater employability competitiveness is the central ideational motive dominating the discourse. The promotion of the personal development of students, stimulating social solidarity and civic engagement come somehow as second to the formerly emphasized purpose. In this listing it is possible to discern a rephrased version of the Council of Europe's range of purposes (later repeated in the London communiqué), but subdues all other purposes to the supremacy of the economic competitiveness and the preparation for a career (employability).

In the same text the discourse is infused with economistic terminology, similar to what can be found in the research papers and expert inputs outsourced by the EU Commission (e.g. Woessman and Schuetz 2006). In this respect, the use of *cost-sharing* that can also be described as a euphemism for tuition fees and payable higher education is emblematic. Another example of this discursive pattern are the twin concepts of *efficiency and equity* that are often used in the discourses legitimizing private funding and market oriented reforms of higher education (see Chapter 8.1). These discursive elements can be interpreted as belonging to the larger discursive trend supporting the ideational stream of the commodification of higher education.

6.5 The significance of the concept of social dimension for this study

The data and interpretation suggest that the middle of the first Bologna decade, the social dimension became the core discursive regularity in the attempts to symbolically counter-balance the hegemony of the Knowledge economy's programmatic idea. The concept was used in the discursive strategy by several actors. Amongst the most notable were indeed the student representatives from the ESIB/ESU. Together with the entrance of students into the Bologna coordinative sphere in 2001, the notion of social dimension also became part of the Bologna vocabulary. Thereafter the social dimension underwent the process of defining and concretising. This process was considerably contingent to the logic of communication within the Bologna coordinative sphere of discourse.

The ESU proved to be a dynamic venue of discourse where its own coordinative process is taking place and where the discursive strategy is taking shape. In this process the discursive regularities, notably *access*, *equality* and *social mobility*, delineated the substantive content of ideas in the ESIB/ESU discursive practice and thereby marked the contours of the organisation's ideation of higher education. However, similarly to the case of the Council of Europe (see Chapter 5), also in the case of the ESIB/ESU it is possible to interpret the attempt to reconcile the organisation's ideational line with the hegemonic imaginary of the *knowledge economy*. The hybrid discourse that emerged from this attempt claimed that only widely accessible higher education contributes to the full mobilisation of potentials for European competitiveness. *Access*, *equality* and *social mobility* are thereby re-contextualised into the complementary elements for achieving competitiveness. The social dimension is presented as enriching the (reductionist) economic instrumentalism in regard to higher education in view of the economic success of the continent.

In this chapter I again argued that the concept, when entering the Bologna coordinative process can be altered or, in this case, even formed by the Bologna logic of communication. Social dimension, when re-contextualised in the Bologna documents, was also additionally conceptualised and altered in its relational meaning. In fact in the Bologna arena the concept met with its adversary and engaged in an interactive process of discourse. Thereby the reshaping and transformation resulted in the discursive hybridisation whereby the discourse is filled with hybrid constructions reflecting the normative ideas of solidarity and equality (based in the

institutional background of post-World War II Western Europe) and the cognitive ideas on the necessity to involve higher education in the economic competition of Europe and in the world.

However, the Bologna discursive animosity regarding the social dimension also affected the discourse that appeared as an adversary. The EU documents reveal that social dimension as a concept was incorporated in the EU discourse, albeit in a considerably inferior position to the competitiveness/economic discourse. In this process of discursive hybridisation the social considerations appear as the discursive strategy to reconcile the cognitive ideas under the label knowledge economy with the normative background of the historically institutionalised idea on a social Europe. This shows the ability of the actors to assume a considerable degree of agency and use their foreground discursive abilities to act strategically. They engage the reference to norms and values and in the same time bring across the cognitive idea on the economic relevance of higher education. The arguments and other elements constituting the EU logic of communication indicate a highly coherent and consistent ideational trajectory. In more colloquial terms, the EU as an actor and as a discursive venue knows what it wants and acts accordingly.

The shifting discursive meanings when interacting with other discourses, indicates how various actors in Bologna became agents and acted strategically. Not only did they act in accordance with their foreground discursive abilities when developing their discursive strategy, but they also used the ability to act strategically in relation to the institutional backgrounds, hence they used their background ideational abilities. As argued in the theoretical part of this dissertation, institutions are internal to 'sentient' (thinking and speaking) agents whose 'background ideational abilities' enable them to create and maintain institutions at the same time that their 'foreground discursive abilities' enable them to communicate critically about those institutions, to change (or maintain) them (Schmidt 2008, 314). Hence the discourse enables the progression of ideas and at the same time appears as an integral part of the institutional fabric – a construct and a structure simultaneously.

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In the following chapter I presented the data and interpretation of the larger scale processes and shifts that were discerned in the analysis of the Bologna Process political dynamics. If the above two chapters focused on the history of particular concepts constituting policy and programmatic ideational streams, the following chapter focused more on the institutional background and the third (philosophical) plane of ideational streams presented in Chapter 4.

7. The confrontation of global trends and local institutional contexts in the Bologna policy arena[26]

In the analyses of Bologna (presented in Chapter 4), I discerned the presence of discursive action that indicated the relevance of the global trends in a growing lucrative transnational industry of higher education, trading in educational services, market oriented regulatory trends, managerial shifts in governance of universities and privatisation of financing. In this chapter I presented a more detailed analysis of the ideational stream in the Bologna Process that cuts deep into the meaning of higher education in Europe.

The global context: Higher education as a competitive and lucrative service on the global market

One of the most obvious contingent processes that connect the European higher education affairs to global issues is the attempt to include higher education into the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). This political course encountered strong opposition in some countries and in civil society (Knight 2002; Knight 2003). The appearance of higher education as a category in trade negotiations raised a fundamental question about the meaning of the institution that occupies an important role in the European social and political world. The global negotiations on trade in services created cross-sectorial tension in civil society, but listing education among potentially liberalised services was one of the burning issues that brought about a strong reaction by grassroots movements, trade unions and various organisations. Through their bottom up communicative activity the civil society organisations contributed to shaping the public opinion and pressed the negotiators (national governments) to exclude the education from the list of liberalised services (Knight 2003, 20-25).

Despite the fact that there was no significant progress in the liberalisation of higher education, the trade in higher education services continued to grow in the last decade (Lim and Honeck 2009, 132). The number of higher education institutions competing on the global market of education services increased and with them the number of countries that export of education

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[26] Parts of the chapter 7 were used in Miklavič (2012).

services in order to expand the private financing of higher education. In these countries higher education is increasingly portrayed as a lucrative business sector increasingly relevant in the overall national economic growth and exports (Robertson 2010a, 197)[27].

These issues echoed also in the Bologna arena and brought along some ideational animosity in the relatively technocratic coordinative discourse of the early phase of the process.

7.1 The diverse institutional background in European countries: UK, France and the Nordic countries

The focus on discursive interaction in the Bologna arena was crucial to detect the discourses and ideas in the context of global developments and trends in higher education. Some ideational trends surfaced only during the interactive process of discourse, therefore in this endeavour the discursive institutionalism proved to be particularly valuable analytical approach. In this part of the research project the key activity was analysing the frictions and tensions in different periods of the process and the interpreting the substantive content of ideas that were engaged in the communication and coordination between various actors. In addition it was beneficial to set the analysis in the institutional context which characterised the action of main protagonists or the venues where discourses involved were generated.

The analysed data set for this chapter came from exceptionally rich variety of sources. It encompassed ministerial communiqués in the Bologna Process, reports and conclusions of follow up events, correspondence within Bologna structures, minutes from the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) meetings regarding trade in education, consecutive drafts of the Berlin Communiqué, minutes from the preparation meetings and a recording from the Bucharest ministerial meeting. A considerable share of this material was gathered from the personal archives of the interviewees. Their accounts served to complement the analyses of the primary documents and indicate backgrounds, intentions and roles and mirror the discursive elements that might be overlooked by a mere examination of the written material. Personal notes and recordings of written electronic communication (in so called "chat" mode) proved to be very beneficial in understanding the micro dynamics in given situations and events. In the field work

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[27] A more detailed account on the global trends and trade in higher education is given in

and the following analysis for the purpose of this chapter, the interviewees served more as informants. The interview texts were not the main sources of arguments and interpretations.

In analysing the institutional context informing the national actors (Bologna signatory countries) I dedicated a particular attention to France and UK as agents in the Bologna interactive process of discourse. France played an important role in the launching of the Bologna Process and the following discursive interaction on the European level, whereas the UK appeared in the interaction in specific moments of the political process, relevant to the argument of this chapter. In the same time both countries are relevant in the European context because of their size and political weight. They are often presented as antagonising each other in the ideational terms, e.g. in relation to the European integration (Crespy 2010; Schmidt 2012b). This makes the two countries (and their interaction in the European arena) especially relevant in the ideational and discursive perspective and therefore interesting for the arguments of this study. In the presented cases also the Nordic countries emerged as relevant participants in the interactive process of discourse. Presenting their institutional background and the discursive action shed light on how the diverse (national and sub-regional) cultural and normative origins can generate similar ideas on the European level.

The UK: The pragmatic vision of European integration and its globally oriented strategy

UK was among the four signatory countries of the Sorbonne declaration, which was an introduction to the Bologna Process. However there was not much involvement of the British minister in drafting the text. The UK signing of the declaration was motivated by the rationale that it is better to be present than excluded in an initiative that anyway took over the reform ideas already introduced in the UK (Ravinet 2005).

This pragmatic attitude can be associated also with Britain's historical and enduring ambivalence about the process of European integration (Hay and Rosamond 2002, 158). From the beginning of the European integration process, Britain has been an 'awkward' and 'reluctant' partner, relying heavily on the pragmatic (calculus based) discourse on EU membership linked almost exclusively to the economic interests (Schmidt 2012b). According to Schmidt (2012b) the UK views EU to be necessary only where there is a problem to be solved, while consistently defining EU identity in opposition to national identity. The integration was mostly expected to solve problems related to the trade barriers, including the expansion of the free trade to the former socialist Europe (Ibid, 174).

Global economic developments were not of concern to the British national discourses on the EU, at least not to the extent that they were in France. Global trends are portrayed as a given fact upon which the domestic policy should act. Moreover, in the British discourse, the globalisation appears more as a constraint, which has been used to legitimate domestic reforms such as a series of measures designed to promote competence and transparency in monetary policy, labour market flexibility etc. (Hay and Rosamond 2002, 158).

The British cognitive ideas on higher education strategy[28]

The UK addressed the global trends of growing competition among higher education providers and systems in a specific way. The rich deliberation in the UK coordinative sphere on the evolution of higher education sector and the transformation of the universities through time, has been present throughout the period of post-industrial era and the mass higher education. But that process reaches beyond the scope of this study.

My interest starts in 1997 when the New Labour government formulated a clear strategy regarding the positioning UK universities on the global scale. The increasingly corporatized universities were given more managerial autonomy and encouraged into competition and commercialisation with new financing arrangements increasingly relying on fees and other private sources (Levidow 2007; Robertson 2010a; Robertson 2010b).

Under pressure to find new sources of funds, universities looked at their future strategically which included looking beyond the borders of national state to new kinds of activities, including the establishment of branch campuses, franchising programmes and increasing the enrolment of international students (Robertson 2010a, 195). This strategy evolved through the 2000s, bringing UK (with 15% of full-fee-paying students in the overall composition of students) to the top of higher education exporters - second only to Australia (20%) (OECD 2009, 309)[29]. The export and income generating strategies led to the establishment of the first for-profit higher education provider in the UK (Robertson 2010b, 25).

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[28] When referring to UK higher education it is necessary to consider the separate authority responsible for higher education in Scotland. The latter consists of distinctive higher education system and sometimes diverges considerably from the rest of the UK.

[29] In the same decade also some continental European countries saw the growth of their higher education export, by attracting foreign students to the domestic universities, but this business in UK has been more commercially oriented and a cleaner example of 'market expansion', whereas e.g. growth of foreign enrolment in Austria reflects the tuition fees policy in the neighboring Germany pushing German students to enroll to Austrian Universities.

The UK's political strategy on globalisation as reflected in deregulation followed its pragmatic reasoning focussed on economic returns from the expanding export industry of services, among which one of the most thriving was higher education. The money involved in all these activities is difficult to calculate, but the fact that in 2011-12 the international students generated a total income of £10.2 billion in living expenses and tuition fees[30] can give a hint that transnational higher education industry turns over significant sums.

The calculus-guided British policy ideas were also directed towards decreasing public costs for higher education by replacing them with the private sources[31]. Needles to stress again how important the transnational education markets were for the UK long term export oriented and economically driven policies.

However, the UK policy ideas are not exclusively cognitive and detached from the normative setting. The meaning of public good in English speaking countries has long been altered away from what can be considered the construct of public good in other parts of Europe. Understandings of public good created by higher education in the UK have become ideologically 'frozen' and legitimised by the positivistic method, so that the public good can scarcely be identified, or juxtaposed to the private benefits (Marginson 2013, 2). The discussion on public good has revolved around the equations scaling public against private benefits of degree beholders (Pusser 2006, 11). The construct of higher education as a private good has been gradually normalised to become part of the institutional framework. The collective benefits are downplayed, and the normative context weakened (Marginson 2013, 13). This calculus logic in the UK coordinative discourse strategy and the cognitive policy ideas found a fertile institutional background, normalised by powerful communicative discourse.

Nordic countries and the Nordic socio-economic model

Northern Europe is a popular destination for those who want to study a well-entrenched and sustainable welfare state, deeply rooted in the cultural settings of the relatively small peripheral countries. A defining characteristic of the Nordic socio-economic model lies in the successful combination of economic growth and high levels of social security, inclusion and equality (Gornitzka and Maassen 2014, 11). The model rests on the values and norms that underpin the

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[30] http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/overseas-students-targeted-in-new-export-strategy/2006056.article

[31] At this point it is possible to argue about the increase of indirect public costs through the corrective policies such as tax reductions, subsidies, but this discussion extends beyond the intended scope of this chapter.

policies. These can be summarised as the concepts of universalism, solidarity and de-commodification (Cox 2004, 205). These values inform a strong normative policy argument and represent the fundamental normative framework that guides the policy action and characterises the discourse. The strong belief of citizens in these values is reflected in the path dependency of the Nordic model when it comes to the reforms and policy ideas (Cox 2004, 216). The course of reforms is constrained by the relatively fixed historical and value structures.

Supranational reform scripts have also penetrated the Nordic countries' reform agendas. For example in Norway, in the early 2000s, a conservative government proposed a comprehensive reform package for the national higher education system, presenting it as introduction of the Bologna Process into national system. One of the main narratives revolved around the urge for an international breakthrough by Norwegian higher education. The reform proposals addressed the need for university governance to incorporate strategic management procedures, to introduce evaluative mechanisms and adopt research 'excellence' policies (Halvorsen and Munch 2011, 140). The policy ideas that eventually materialised in reforms were not as radical as initially proposed by the ambitious minister, and were later partially reversed, but important elements of the reform strategy remained, seen as necessary for placing Norwegian higher education on the world map (ibid.). Similar trends can be observed e.g. in Demark and Finland (Gornitzka and Maassen 2014). But it is a characteristic of Norway that in all cases higher education remained an integral part of a system of public goods to be protected from privatisation, deregulation and commercialisation.

The Nordic model undermines the credibility of the idea of competition, privatisation and economic logic in higher education institutions and systems as the most viable alternative for the future of higher education. In many respects the Nordic countries have demonstrated that despite their loyalty to a system with high taxes and abundant public expenditure on public institutions they score highly in on social and economic indicators, including in terms of performance of their universities (Gornitzka and Maassen 2014, 12). This belief in the public responsibility for maintaining this model is accepted across the political spectrum. As such it represents a cultural/r normative platform for political action.

France: Historical and ideological background informing the international discursive action

During the first stage of this research project I interpreted the French activity as outstandingly strong in bringing about the normative type of ideas through a conspicuous discursive activity

and style. It was due to this French peculiarity and also, as I argue below, due to its position in European history that I chose to present the argument of this chapter through French activity in the Bologna Process. This choice was also an attempt to outline some ideational aspects of the Europeanization of higher education that connect deeply to the historical and normative (institutional) context of Europe post World War II Europe. For the sake of clarity it is helpful to begin with a presentation of the history of French involvement in the European integration.

Traditionally the French discourse on European integration rests on normative ideas on value based community, building peace, prosperity, solidarity, tolerance, and mutual respect and cherishing common cultural heritage while respecting the cultural diversity of European nations (Schmidt 2012b, 177). This ideational foundation of *Europe as a value-based political community* is juxtaposed and sometimes opposed to the vision of *Europe as an economic community*. In her discursive institutionalist analysis of the elite visions of European integration, Schmidt (2012b) argues that in the French case the European identity is constructed as an extension of national identity. This construction is guided by President De Gaulle's foundational paradigm of the country's political leadership in Europe whereby European integration is a *multiplier of power* that would bring gains not only in terms of regional power and economic interest but also in terms of identity, by enhancing the country's *grandeur* as it projected its universalist *republican ideals* onto the rest of Europe (Schmidt 2012b, 178).

Some observations suggest an intensified anti-US and anti-globalisation stance in the French political debate (Hay 2002, 156). In this discursive practice *globalisation* is associated with the 'neo-liberal' ideology, and as such represents a cultural threat to the imagined Europe of values. It is discursively engaged as a central adversary to French cultural identity (Grossman and Woll 2011, 345). Globalisation is discursively constructed as a powerful and inexorable process of economic change through which the tyranny of Anglo-Saxon (largely American) cultural imperialism proliferates (Hay 2002, 153). TDomestic anti-globalisation sentiment has soared [since?] and includes a range of various forms of expression of bottom-up communicative discourse including grassroots movements, organised interest groups and intellectuals. In the broader socio-cultural perspective, attitudes against 'neo-liberal' policy proposals have become part of national frames and all proposals linked to the free markets are likely to run into opposition (Grossman and Woll 2011, 345).

The bottom up communicative discourse considerably affected the decision making elite in the policy sphere. Decades after De Gaulle's vision of the integrated Europe of nations

(independent from the US) President Mitterrand extended the ideation of Europe through the discourse of EU as a shield against Globalisation and pushed it into a more federalist direction (Schmidt 2012b, 179). This propelled an ideational re-launch of European integration and legitimised further steps in the economic integration as a response and alternative to the economic globalisation.

In the aftermaths of Mitterrand era the discourse on Globalisation as a cultural threat advanced along two tracks. On the one side was the growing general scepticism towards everything international and transnational (especially the economic narratives); on the other, the vision of European integration as a bulwark against the undesirable consequences of globalisation continued to advance (Hay 2002, 156). In the mid-2000s the pro-Europe communicative discourse lost out to the bottom up euro sceptical discourse (co-opted by some party - political fractions) resulting in the rejection of the European Constitutional treaty on the referendum (Crespy 2010, 1263). The anti-globalisation discourse was further enhanced by the proposed EU Directive on services in the internal market (the so called Bolkestein directive), enhancing the influence of anti-globalist civil society (Grossman and Woll 2011, 353).

The normative discourse and the French higher education

As argued in detail further in this chapter, the historical and normative institutional context heavily influenced the action of French representatives in the Bologna Process; especially when there was a contingent political turmoil that affected the domestic political sphere and stirred up a traditionally strong anti-globalisation bottom up communicative action by the French civil society (notably trade and student unions). The strength of the normative ideational line in the case of France was eloquently described also by a French civil servant involved in the Bologna Process:

This is a part of the French Revolution and Napoleon [laughter]. In USA education is an individual right which brings benefits to people and they are asked to pay the benefits. From the French Revolution, education is a public right, a collective right, the country has interest. It becomes constitutional. School and politics are connected to the principle of "laicité" which is very important in France. The second reason is the idea after Second World War to rebuild the French culture. This was important especially in the expansion of American culture. It is visible in French cinema for example, against the Hollywood expansion. The third reason is that the education and culture are both in the left. There are strong organisations, student unions and trade unions. These have a strong

conception of education. It should be independent from trade, as much as it must be independent from church. And this is very strong in France. (Interview 10).

The French higher education sector is therefore firmly embedded in the Republican value system which represents a strong institutional framework underpinning institutional stability. It is averse to the cognitive policy ideas promoted by e.g. the OECD and the EU. In recent decades the French reforms have swung between 1. Republican norms and values (most notably egalitarianism and meritocracy); and 2. managerial centralisation in pursuit of efficiency and excellence encapsulated in the discourse of autonomy (Cremonini et al. 2013).

France's relatively bad performance on some of the most popular global ranking of universities has pushed French policy-makers into a series of reform attempts to try and navigate between Scylla and Charybdis - the demands for modernisation associated with the world class university and the invocation of higher education embedded in the traditional republican norms and values (Cremonini et al. 2013, 111). The proverbial inability of the government to carry out the reforms is seen as mainly originating in the powerful movement of teacher and student unions which defend their privileges and rights and rely on the normative ideas engaged in a powerful bottom up communicative discourse, usually co-opting the public opinion. Therefore the reform strategy often evokes the international arguments and uses the international political arena as a pretext and to gain momentum in the domestic sphere:

It is about French history. This is a strong element. If France doesn't stay in public politics this becomes a public problem, a political problem at home. In that period the autonomy was on the agenda of discussion and there was discussion on many problems. There are problems, problem one, problem two... [he draws on a sheet of paper], they are national problems. These problems are not possible to solve inside, we cannot solve them without considering foreign ways to do higher education politics (interview 10).

In France, the Bologna Process has become an intermediate host of exported domestic discourses to be then reconceptualised back as an international obligation and as a form of internationalisation that is friendly to France as opposed to globalisation as conceptualised in the dominant Anglo-Saxon mode.

7.2 The clash of ideas on higher education in the Berlin ministerial summit: local norms vs. global shifts

The nature and characteristics of Bologna Process are extensively dealt with in the earlier chapters of this dissertation (see Chapter 4), but nevertheless the main lines are be briefly summarised here in the interests of clarity in this chapter.

Sorbonne initiative: an extension of French vision of Europe to higher education?

However the event in Sorbonne appears to be part of a well-constructed international process provided with all ceremonial and procedural characteristics, this was not the case. The realisation of the idea on pan-European coordination for higher education reform that would transcend the initiatives of the EU Commission started precisely in the above spotlighted country – France. The document that set out the trajectory of the Bologna Process was a declaration signed by the ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the UK at the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the University of Sorbonne in Paris in 1998.

It is important to highlight here that in the Sorbonne Declaration it is possible to detect some discursive elements that constitute a strong political stand and express a normative vision of European integration. These elements indicate the decision to launch the project independent of the EU Commission. The will to show a political alternative to the heavily economised integration agenda of the EU appeared strong (Ravinet 2005, 7). In the first lines of Sorbonne Declaration (1998) the four ministers announce they want to see European integration happen *on grounds other than just financial and economic* and call on universities as central institutions of Western civilisation to play an active role in this. This was indeed a strong and straightforward statement that indicates a distinctive normative position of the authors. The statement draws on the academic values agreed upon in the *Magna Charta Universitatum* (1988)[32] and is clearly uttering opposition to the economic nature of European integration. This matches the strong normative idea on Europe in which the French political sphere is deeply embedded (Schmidt 2012b) and which occasionally spills over to other continental countries (Crespy 2010, 1263).

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[32] Magna Charta Universitatum is a declaration signed by European universities gathered in Bologna in 1988 in the occasion of the anniversary of the University of Bologna. The discourse of the paper is heavily normative in the attempt to state the values of European universities and the academic world.

It is not a coincidence that this happened in France and on the French initiative. French political elites have constructed for decades the vision of European integration as an extension of national identity – an entity where France takes the political leadership and spreads the values of the Republic (Schmidt 2012b, 178). But the unification of the EU Single Market, the common currency of the euro and the political turn in the EU integration evident by the late 1990s gave new life to the picture of economically driven globalisation. The combination of the decisive economic turn and the adoption of the competitive knowledge economy hegemonic imaginary, set the European integration on a path that was in conflict with a more normative French vision of Europe and education.

The Sorbonne discourse invoked the University as a central institution of Western civilisation and one that should play an active role in normative ideation in the future. Thereby French vision of European integration (symbolically referred to with the discourse on *Europe of culture*) was transferred into the realm of Europeanization of higher education. The normative discourse presented higher education as an important non-economical dimension of the European integration which is set out to be run by the governments and not by the EU Commission. Thus, The Sorbonne Declaration was substantially infused with the French normative context.

The pragmatic discursive turn towards cognitive ideas and economic rationale

The core of the discourse in the following document (Bologna Declaration 1999) remained faithful to the values laid out in Sorbonne introducing the principles of *diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems* and of *university autonomy*. However the rival vision based on more pragmatic reasoning, notably in promoting free markets and regional security, left its footprint in the declaration too. The concept of competitiveness, accompanied by its euphemism *attractiveness*, made its entry into the Bologna discursive arena. This indicates the presumption of 'global' as relevant in designing the future of higher education in Europe.

Only two years later in Prague (2001) the distinct normative discourse took a decisive twist. Here it is possible to argue that the reconceptualised vision of European integration was flanked by another compatible but distinctive discourse. The ministers supported the idea that "higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community" (Prague Communiqué 2001). The statement presents a vision of higher education as not of mere technical or structural nature, but directly linked to the notion of public good. The public good

can be considered as one of the concepts central to the ideation and materialisation of the modern liberal western state (Nixon 2011, 16).

The distinctiveness of this discourse becomes clearer when analysing the background of the policy interaction and the coordinative discourse. The coordination in the run up to the Prague ministerial meeting unfolded in parallel to already heated debate regarding the listing of the services of public interest into the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). One of the high ranking French civil servants involved in the Bologna issues (when asked about the first time when WTO developments were discussed in the Bologna forum) remembered:

> *I think the first discussion was in one meeting before the Prague meeting of ministers, where we discussed the "public good". There were a lot of differing opinions and definitions. I remember the German delegate saying that for him public good is the air. Then came OMC [WTO] and there was more discussion on public good.* (Interview 10)

In the Prague communique there is also an acknowledgement of *the* trend to *transnational education, a trend* that undermine the supremacy of the state in the regulation of higher education. This is the first concrete indication that the Bologna Process forum implicitly perceives transnational education and the related global trade issues as a challenge requiring a new approach that is beyond the control of an individual government/national authority.

In other words in Prague the policy community coordinating the higher education reform proposals clearly acknowledged the global changes in the provision of higher education and the trend towards the crossbred nature of new modes of provision in the weakly regulated transnational space, without an explicate normative or cognitive stand towards it.

Berlin 2003[33] – the global issues in the Bologna arena

Berlin - the fourth (officially third) political summit of the Bologna Process was organised by the German federal government in September 2003. The period between Prague and Berlin coincided with the intensive talks regarding General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within WTO framework.

The debate on GATS occurred in various Bologna related fora and was registered in a number of documents, such as meeting minutes, declarations, conclusions of seminars, correspondence

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[33] The author of this paper attended the Berlin summit as a member of the national delegation of the Republic of Slovenia and therefore some accounts reflect his own personal observations and memories of the event.

etc. These numerous events and fora offered an ample platform for strategic interaction, negotiations, persuasion and bargaining. The issue of GATS negotiation was brought to the Bologna forum already during the drafting phase and in the events that were organised under the Bologna Process umbrella – which can be considered the Bologna coordinative sphere or policy arena.

The coordinative sphere before Berlin summit was heavily occupied with the issue of trade in higher education. The first documented reference to the GATS dates back to September 2002. At that stage the discussion mainly revolved around the concern to fit the transnational education into the frame of the recognition of qualifications regime in Europe. In the following months this paragraph went through continuous drafts, mainly in the direction of making Europe attractive to non-European students, and acknowledging the global competition as driving force in developing higher education in many countries. It seems that attractiveness was a euphemism for competitiveness. This line of argument remained coherent with the political rationale of the knowledge economy, including the instrumentalisation of higher education for economic purposes and the idea that the competitiveness of a country or region depends on the attractiveness of its higher education.

From the archives of the Greek member of the BFUG it is possible to discern a dynamic process of negotiating and coordinating the agreement on policy ideas between various actors in regard to WTO GATS[34]:

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1. **First drafts towards Berlin**

a) First draft of Communiqué in August 2002 (23.08.02) by the Germans (namely by Hans Rainer Friedrich and Birger Hendriks): A very short text without any reference to GATS or to WTO or to trade.

b) Second draft in September 2002 (26.09.02) by the same authors: A somehow longer draft including an additional chapter on External Relations with two paragraphs, the second of which included reference to GATS:

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[34] The text in the box is direct transcript of the written memories of prof. Dionisis Kladis based on the documents from the drafting process conserved in his personal archive. The memories were written as a courtesy to this study in September 2011.

"The Ministers regard higher education as a public good. Being aware that the General Agreement on Trades in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organization (WTO) also covers services in higher education the Ministers point out that such trade must be in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the realisation of the EHAE."

c) A third draft was prepared by the Danish Presidency (Mogens Berg) in 29.11.02, where the 'External Relations' chapter was renamed to 'Promoting the Attractiveness of the EHEA' without any reference to the trade issue:

"Ministers agreed that the external dimension of the Bologna Process should be founded on the attractiveness and openness of European higher education and on cooperation with partner regions. Scholarship programmes for students from third countries should be further developed. The idea of the Bologna Process should be promoted to other parts of the world. The results from policy development in seminars should be open to other partner regions."

Note: By that time, a working group was created, composed of German (with Hermann Müller-Solger replacing Hans Rainer Friedrich), Denmark (current presidency), Greece (next presidency) and Italy (presidency following Greece). It should be noted that in many cases there were opposite approaches between the Germans and the other three countries.

d) The above draft of the Danish presidency was redrafted in 12.01.03 under the pressure of the Germans and was presented to the first meeting of the working group in Hamburg on 22.01.03. This new draft included reference to trade:

"Global competition remains a driving force for the development of higher education in participating countries, in particular with a view to the ongoing negotiations on international trade in education services led by the WTO. Ministers stressed that more should be done to open every country and institution of higher learning and the emerging European Higher Education Area as a whole to a larger extent to students and teachers from other parts of the world. They set the goal for the year 2010 to become the most attractive region for students from outside Europe."

e) The above draft was amended in 22.01.03 in Hamburg and took its final form that was presented to the February meeting of the BFUG in Athens (18.02.03):

"*Recalling that global competition remains a driving force for the development of higher education in participating countries, in particular with a view to the ongoing negotiations on international trade in education services led by the WTO Ministers agreed that the attractiveness and openness of European higher education should be reinforced especially through cooperation with partner regions. Relations with third countries shall be facilitated as well as broadened. Scholarship programmes for students from third countries should be further developed. Ministers welcome the new proposal "ERASMUS world" of the European Commission. They confirm their readiness to cooperate with all countries and regions outside Europe and invite students and teachers with good qualifications to choose one or more European countries for their education and work.*"

Note: While all previous drafts were discussed and prepared by the working group (Denmark, Greece, Italy and Germany), an intensive correspondence with the various delegations started before the February BFUG meeting in Athens and continued until the June BFUG meeting in Athens (20-21.06.03).

The compromise formulation between the need to attract brain from overseas in order to boost the economy and the containment of the proliferation of trade rules into higher education began to stabilise around the policy idea of enhancing and promoting cooperation and mobility. The argumentative device of need for more student and teacher incomers is connected to need for "open" and "attractive" higher education in the region and more scholarships. The trade issue and mentioning the WTO was alternating between being included and excluded from the drafts.

The BFUG seminar dedicated to social dimension and GATS

In February 2003 the Greek ministry responsible for higher education organised a seminar dedicated to the social dimension of higher education that preceded the official meeting of civil servants (see below). The incumbent government belonged to the main party of the left (Pasok). The seminar was listed among the events within the Bologna Process and was supposed to inform the drafting process of the final document to be adopted by the ministers. According to the participants to this seminar, the non-national actors contributed substantially to the discussion and the conclusions. One out of two pages of the conclusions was dedicated to the issue of trade in education. They noted the increasing trend towards *global competition in*

higher education (BFUG 2003a). As their response to what they identified in the note, they formulated the following:

> *...the main objective driving the creation of the EHEA and the internationalisation of HE on a global level, should first and foremost be based on academic values and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world* (BFUG 2003a).

This was a clear stand in relation to the contingent GATS negotiations in the WTO and the use of normative ideas denoted by the concepts of *academic values* and *co-operation*. The seminar conclusions were not a high level political document, but nevertheless reflect a certain mood in the Bologna coordinative forum.

In the following days the Greek presidency of the EU hosted a meeting of civil servants constituting the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)[35]. The BFUG was already in the stage of drafting the final document (communiqué). In this meeting GATS negotiations were officially discussed. The minutes[36] reveal that the EU Commission representative was the main source on developments in this area since the EU Commission was in charge of negotiating with the WTO on behalf of EU members. The EU Commission representative gave a mere technical overview on the stage the negotiations within the GATS framework were at and what had been the position of the EU by then. He assured the audience that there would be no further offers by the EU within GATS negotiation which would in theory mean that education is out of the scheme. But the concerns about GATS were not over. Namely, some small steps in the direction of involving private higher education institutions in the liberalisation of trade had already been taken beforehand. This brought up the issue of definition of private and public, especially when considering the source of funding for higher education.

Thus, between the two contending ideational lines the tension gradually increased. The balancing of ideas with adversary concepts became a discursive regularity. Concerns for public good nature of higher education, cooperation and the social role of higher education on one bank were opposed to the discourse of global competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education in the view of improving the economic performance of Europe on the other bank. The latter was of clearly pragmatic nature and was pursued by some individual

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[35] The BFUG meeting occurred on 18.2.2003. BFUG members were signatory states ministry officials, responsible for preparing the communiqué for Berlin summit of ministers.
[36] The minutes of the BFUG meeting in Athens (18 February 2003) were obtained from the personal archives of Dionisis Kladis, responsible on behalf of the Greek ministry to co-ordinate the BFUG during the Greek presidency of the EU.

participating countries as opposed to the appropriateness legitimisation that accompanied the clearly normative nature of the former. The explicit reference to the GATS and trade was falling out and coming back into the draft communiqué several times in the run up to the ministerial meeting.

The archives of the Greek member of the BFUG describe the sequence as follows[37]:

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2. The February BFUG meeting in Athens (18.02.03)

a) Amendments proposed by various delegations to the above draft before the February BFUG meeting in Athens:

-Francophone Belgium, France, Sweden, Greece: Reference to WTO and to global competition is not accepted. Need for rephrasing.

-Additional paragraph proposed by ESIB:

"The ministers regard higher education as a public good. The ministers point out that the potential to develop future and maintain existing regulatory structures on a national or international level should not be jeopardised by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). An assessment of the impact of the GATS on higher education, taking account of the role of HE in society, is necessary. Any negotiations regarding the regulation of HE should involve representatives of the higher education community as core partners"

Proposal by Council of Europe for the replacement of the whole paragraph:

"Ongoing negotiations on international trade in education services led by the WTO reflect that global competition is a driving force for the development of higher education in many countries. In the Bologna Process, Ministers will work to increase the attractiveness and openness of European higher education, especially through cooperation with partner regions. They confirm their readiness to cooperate with all countries and regions outside Europe and invite students and teachers with good qualifications to choose one or more European countries for their education and work. They further undertake to win acceptance, within the relevant frameworks, for the need

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[37] The text in the box is direct transcript of a section of the written memories of prof. Dionysis Kladis based on the documents from the drafting process conserved in his personal archive. The memories were written as a courtesy to this study in September 2011. Ditto

to base all international cooperation as well as any trade in higher education on clear and transparent standards for quality, and to facilitate and broaden relations with third countries on this basis".

-Proposal by Belgium (Flanders) and the Netherlands for the replacement of the whole paragraph according to the initial Danish draft, i.e. without any reference to GATS or WTO or trade (see above, Mogens Berg 29.11.02):

"Ministers agreed that the external dimension of the Bologna Process should be founded on the attractiveness and openness of European higher education and on cooperation with partner regions. Scholarship programmes for students from third countries should be further developed. The idea and the good practice of the Bologna Process should be promoted to other parts of the world. The results from policy development in seminars should be open to other partner regions".

From the amendments in the process of coordinating agreements between the actors in the Bologna Process it is possible to interpret the contending views on what the compromise should have looked like. While France, Belgium (French speaking Wallonia), Greece and Sweden linked the definition of higher education firmly to the notion of public good and rejected trade in higher education, the Council of Europe tried to push forward the policy mechanisms that would regulate the transnational education, whereas the Flemish part of Belgium and the Netherlands entirely focus on the "attractiveness and openness" discourse in order to raise the number of overseas students on European universities. It is possible to conclude, that the Bologna Process hosted an intense discursive interaction of a distinctively coordinative type. A variety of meetings and the pertaining outcomes offer a rich evidence of political interaction leading up to the last months preceding the Berlin ministerial summit.

The issue of trade in education in the coordinative sphere of Bologna in the very last period preceding the summit in Berlin

In the preparation phase for the ministerial summit, the government of France was exceptionally active in putting forward normative ideas in an assertive discursive strategy. In the months preceding the ministerial meeting the French government proposed a series of amendments all related to GATS and trade in education. The French ministry responsible for higher education submitted the proposals in the form of official letters to the coordinators responsible for drafting

the Communiqué. One of the letters stated that the communiqué had to be more explicit about education and the GATS than the draft of May 2003. They proposed the following:

Ministers point out that the possibility to maintain and to develop existing structures of regulation at national or international level is based on the specificity of education and on the cultural diversity ; they reaffirm that educational services should not be part of the negotiations in the GATS context[38].

The crucial two elements of the vision and concerns of French government in the cited section of the letter are the *specificity of national systems* and *cultural diversity*. They both indicate the endeavour to retain the power of regulation of higher education in the hands of national authorities. This can be explained with a larger ideational positioning/attitude of France towards various levels and dimensions of the European integration (see Chapter 7.1.).

In the same letter the French ministry complained about the language used in the communiqué. Namely in one of the intermediate versions of the draft communiqué the term *trade* was used together with *higher education* in the paragraph on cooperation, which disturbed the French ministry. In a letter[39] the French ministry rejected any explicit reference to trade in a document that was dedicated to higher education and accordingly demanded the removal of the term trade from the draft text.

[W]e consider that the words "as well as any trade" should be deleted. The cooperation in educational sector is definitely not a trade[40].

The accuracy in reading the proposed texts and the accompanying language sensitivity shows the determination and assertiveness of the French ministry about the vision and ideas on higher education.

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[38] A letter from the French Ministry of Youth, Education and Research signed by Daniel Vitry, Director of International Affairs and Co-operation, addressed to Mr Muller-Solgar, Chairman of the BPG and Mr Dionyssis Kladis, Chairman of the BFUG, undated. The letter referred to the intermediate draft communiqué from 26.5.2003. A copy of the letter was obtained from the personal archives of Pavel Zgaga, the official Bologna Process Rapporteur between Prague and Berlin ministerial summits.
[39] In one of the intermediate versions from Bonn on 19.5.2003, the draft communique included the phrase *…the need to base all international cooperation as well as any trade in higher education on clear and transparent standards for quality…* (from the personal archives of Dionisis Kladis –Interview 3)
[40] The same letter as in the foot note 13

Eventually the BFUG forum of national representatives (civil servants) agreed on a wording that took in consideration the French amendments. This text implied a clear stand on trade in education. The draft communiqué that ministers got on the table contained the following line:

Ministers declare that transnational exchanges in higher education should be governed on the basis of academic quality and academic values, and agree to work in all appropriate fora to that end (Berlin communiqué 2003).

The reference to the concepts of *quality* and *academic values* appeared as central in the statement that was an outcome of coordination process where the issue of higher education in the global negotiations on liberalisation of (educational) services was addressed. The political process brought to an agreement that higher education should stay under the supervision of public authorities and not left to the global markets and the pertaining (de)regulation. Thus the concepts of quality and academic values were discursively engaged into forming an adversary position against the trade/market principles. Even though the attempted liberalisation of trade in higher education within WTO did not appear in the text, it is obviously implied as a tacit element. This indeed became clear when the context is taken into consideration and once the background is unveiled. The so created discursive antagonism indicated an area of symbolic tension between the two conceptualisations and underlying ideas on the position and meaning of higher education in society.

Quality has been used as an element of the Bologna and implying the quality monitoring by the publicly arranged mechanisms such as quality assurance agencies in the process of building up trust among the European systems and to ease the process of recognition of diplomas for easier mobility of graduates (Zgaga 2007). As placed above, the concept is re-contextualised. It appears as an argument for establishing new regulatory mechanisms in order to limit the transnational provision of higher education on all levels and all fora, which implies also transnational levels. Here it is possible to observe the discursive orientation to an argumentative device on the necessity for transnational regulatory system in line with what I referred above as neo-constitutionalism (Hartman 2008).

The concept of *academic values* is however way less clear and loosely integrated into the discourse. The lack of clarity can in this also be contributed to the genre of the document, but this does not make it less relevant for further examination. It is a new concept in the texts of Bologna Process and was brought into the Bologna vocabulary for the precise purpose of expressing the normative attitude towards trade in education and call for the regulatory

measures to tame the trend of commodification of higher education. The reference to academic values brings into the discourse a powerful normative tone antagonising the global developments based on commercial principles and adhering to the perceived interest of the transnational education industry. The French civil servants interviewed confirmed the discursive use of the academic values as an adversary concept to the commodification of higher education with stating that *academic values are a follow up to public good related to OMC* [WTO] (Interviews 9 and 10).

The member of the BFUG from another country (interview 5) remembers that eventually there was a general consensus among the Bologna signatories about the GATS and trade issues in the sense that this approach was somehow at odds with the *spirit of Bologna*, but the issue was nevertheless not yet sealed.

The confrontation at the ministerial summit

The compromise wording proposed by the civil servants to the ministerial summit (above quoted) was not enough for France. The French government wanted more. It wanted a clear and strong positioning already in the preamble. Therefore a second letter was sent to the BFUG in the very last drafting phase, insisting on an explicit negative statement on listing higher education in the GATS and announcing that the amendment would be submitted to the procedure at the ministerial summit itself. The letter justified the move with the following:

> *The French minister of Youth, Education and Research considers that this sentence* [the above quoted segment of Berlin communique referring to international cooperation and using quality and academic values] *is welcome in this part of the communiqué but it needs to be strengthened by the already mentioned adding proposal in the preamble. He expressed his point of view in public on this matter and he is definitely decided to recall it during the Berlin conference. So we do hope that an agreement could be reached during the BFUG meeting on the 17th of September*[41].

France was determined to bring forward the political statement in a grand style in order to emphasise the political message. As explained in the analysis (bellow) the French action was a consequence of the national institutional background and especially of a strong domestic bottom

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[41] A letter from the French Ministry of Youth, Education and Research signed by Daniel Vitry, Director of International Affairs and Co-operation, dated 30 July 2003, addressed to Mr. Muller-Solgar, Chairman of the BPG and Mr Guido Possa, Chairman of the BFUG. Obtained courtesy of Pavel Zgaga, the Bologna Process Rapporteur between Prague and Berlin.

up communicative discourse opposing the commodification of services and institutions of general (public) interest. French ministry was unstoppable in its normative ideational line and was ready to go ahead with a coordinative action at the political summit in Berlin. The amendment aimed for a clear political commitment to keep higher education out of the GATS negotiations:

[...] *and they [ministers] precise that international academic exchanges in higher education should not be considered as ordinary exchanges and subordinated to purely commercial principles.* [42]

Behind the scenes the text of the amendment was however slightly, but for the matter of this analyses importantly modified indicating the change of French discursive strategy. It was handed out to the ministers at the Berlin summit itself in the following wording:

They [ministers] *emphasise that international academic cooperation and exchanges must be based on academic values and not ruled by commercial principles.* [43]

At the session of ministers, the French minister, Luc Ferry, asked the German federal minister who chairing the meeting for the floor. When he obtained it, he passionately defended the amendment, which was already on the table of the ministers. This action was peculiar first of all because it aimed at changing the text during the actual summit of the ministers. The communiqués have usually been negotiated in advance by the working groups so they could be just formally and solemnly adopted at the summits. Yet, instead, in Berlin the French minister handed in the amendment to be discussed during the summit itself.[44].

The amendment immediately showed as topical. The ministers took the floor one by one in support of the amendment, but also in opposition to it. One of the first to oppose it, was the minister from the UK, who argued that the language of the amendment was ambiguous and proposed to scrap it. Interestingly, in the discussion the Norwegian minister from the conservative government sided with the UK (see the analysis below).

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[42] (ibid)

[43] The original form of the amendment is taken from the organisers' handout. The handout is kept in the author's personal archives.

[44] At the meeting in Berlin two other amendments were proposed by the delegations of the French Community of Belgium, and Croatia.

After heated debate and politically charged arguments, the German chair called for a break and called on a group of ministers to come up with a compromise that eventually met with a consensus and became part of the Berlin Communiqué:

They (the ministers) emphasise that in international academic cooperation and exchanges, academic values should prevail (Berlin Communiqué 2003).

From historical path dependence to communicative action – the internationalisation of the French domestic political debate

The almost unique case of political animosity within the European policy arena can tell much more if we dig below the surface. The insight in the history of French vision of European integration, the French role in the start-up of Bologna Process in Sorbonne and the domestic political scene at the time of French political action within the Bologna arena show that there is much more than just a solitary action of a state or its civil servants. In the following sections I analysed the interactive process of discourse in the above presented cases of French action in the Bologna process in the first five years up to the Berlin summit.

The reference to the WTO negotiation and the fierce resistance to framing higher education as a tradable commodity in this context can be attributed to the re-contextualisation of the radicalised anti-globalisation sentiment in France described above. The coordinative action of French representatives in the preparation phase and the follow up coordinative action at the ministerial summit in Berlin reflect a heated domestic political debate on education in WTO/GATS agreement. The French reaction in this case is comparable to the French reaction to the liberalisation of services within the EU in the so called Bolkestein directive a few years later. Similarly to GATS also the EU internal act on liberalisation of trade in services triggered a normative action in a bottom up communicative discourse by the trade unions, non-governmental organisations, anti-globalist grassroots movements in France and across Europe (Crespy 2010, 1255). As in the GATS and Bologna cases, and also in the case of Bolkestein directive, the French political elite used globalisation for its internal communicative discursive action, which then put France at odds with the proposed directive (unlike the UK, which only found very few flaws in it) (Grossman and Woll 2011, 345,360).[45]

These cases suggest a strong domestic political activity bound to history, ideas and (in the larger sense) to institutional/structural background. In such cases the French government finds itself

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[45] The Bolkestein directive (Directive on services) was subjected to the analysis in the chapter 9.

in the dilemma between the national deadlock and adjusting to the international/global processes. In the case of the Bologna process I argue that French political leadership acted informed by domestic institutional/ideational context engaging into political interaction whereby it is making use of its background ideational abilities. In other words, French agency is conscious of the domestic cultural and historical framework using it on the international level and then re-using the internationally forged discourses as a lever to bring across policy ideas in the domestic communicative arena.

The embeddedness of the French political action in the national institutional background transpired also from the interviews of the two French high ranking civil servants. They discursively constructed the Bologna and GATS as the mutually exclusive processes:

There is Bologna and there is OMC. OMC [WTO] is not a good way because there is no consensus. There is a lot of opposition to OMC [WTO] like students, trade unions. Bologna is a good way out of problems, it has a broader consensus. If French government chooses OMC [WTO] we would have huge demonstrations, one million people on the streets. (Interview 10).

They referred to WTO as a regime for organising and in a way regulating the transnational education on its way towards liberalisation. WTO was in fact viewed as a sort of regulation framework for the ever more loose trade in education. However the French public discourse opposed any connection between trade and education. The magnitude of the bottom up communicative discursive action at home was restricting the political manoeuvring space and left the government with little option:

Also the cultural sector is against OMC [WTO]. The cinema and TV production was also strongly opposing OMC [WTO], they were very active in that period. Culture and education are not a question; this is an issue at the level of the president and is not discussible. It doesn't matter which political party is on power is always the same. (Interview 9)

The dramatic action of French minister at the Bologna ministerial summit in Berlin was promptly advertised in the domestic communicative sphere which underpins the argument of the communicative action of French government in the coordinative international sphere for the

domestic public. Namely, the same day a press release was sent out to the media describing the French endeavour at the table of the European ministers responsible for higher education.[46]

The case of the coordinative action during and prior to the Berlin ministerial meeting informs my argument of the presence of the evolving ideation of higher education as tradable good in the Bologna Process. Even though the ideas are not on the record, they can be interpreted through a strong discursive strategy opposed to them. In the following analysis I will analyse further the coordinative action related to commodification of higher education argue about the relevance of this case for the aims of this study.

In the years following the 2003 Berlin Summit of the Bologna Process the debate on trade in higher education services has never come back to the spotlight. But this does not mean that the ideational stream of viewing higher education as a tradable good has disappeared. On the contrary, the continuous expansion of the transnational higher education industry has been accompanied by international and transnational policy initiatives attempting to facilitate the business. One example is the EU Directive on trade in services (see Chapter 9) which gained salience in the pin the EU political arena in the mid-2000s (Hackl 2012).

In this context more attention was dedicated the regulation of transnational providers, especially in terms of quality. The result of the debate was a direct reference to the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross Border Higher Education[47].

According to a connoisseur of the Bologna Process, even though academic values were not mentioned directly, they were the main symbol of discursive front against advancing trade in higher education lived on in the concepts of *institutional autonomy*[48], *academic freedom*, *equal opportunities* and *democratic principles* (Interview 8).

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[46] The press release is available on http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid422/enseignement-superieur-sommet-de-berlin.html (5.11.2013).
Here is the segment of the press release in original language :
»Luc Ferry, ministre de la Jeunesse, de l'Education nationale et de la Recherche, a obtenu lors de l'ultime négociation que dans le texte du communiqué final, il soit ajouté que « dans les échanges et la coopération académique, les critères académiques devaient prévaloir » sur les intérêts commerciaux, politiques, religieux«
[47] Published by Unesco and OECD in 2005, available at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/51/35779480.pdf (20.10.2010).
[48] The interviewee referred to institutional autonomy in terms of protected academic field and professional autonomy, and not in the sense of professional leadership and management, as it is re-contextualized by the policy discourses (see chapter 11.1.6).

7.3 "The Global financial crisis" and the re-emergence of the antagonist discourses regarding the ideation of higher education: the Bucharest political interaction[49]

In the last years of the first Bologna decade another exogenous impulse affected the discussion on higher education at the European level. Namely what was often referred to as the "global financial crisis" swept across the European countries and affected the policies and problem definitions.[50] Perhaps there is no need to further underpin the argument that the general public discourses were dominated by the references to austerity and necessity for budget cuts. Higher education as one of the important public policy sectors was not immune to this phenomenon.

In this and previous chapters I have already drawn attention to how the discourse and ideas of the day direcly affected the interactive process of discourse in the Bologna Process (e.g. the EU Lisbon strategy, the negotiation in WTO, etc). The global financial crisis was yet another case confirming how receptive the Bologna political forum has been to contingent events and the pertaining discourses. The first reference to financial crisis came into the discourse in the same year as financial markets collapsed across the globe. At the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial conference the ministers acknowledged the *financial and economic crisis* and drew again on the knowledge economy economic imaginary (and related centrality of higher education considered as an investment) as a solution for the acknowledged economic problem (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communique 2008). Public financing was the central concept used in the political message sent out by the higher education policy community, while the budget cuts and austerity measures were looming on the horizon. Here it does not take much to argue that the ground became fertile for the cognitive ideas on privatisation of higher education financing. The external problem of budget deficits was in fact a handy argument in defining problem that would set the course of providing solutions of this type.

Four years later at the Bucharest ministerial summit (2012) the issue of financing higher education was again at the centre of the debate. The coordinative action of the international

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[49] This sub-chapter relies on considerable amount of non-conventional sources such as personal notes, recordings of electronic written communication, audio recordings, discussions with witnesses (not interviews), hard copies of the text amendments. Most of it was courtesy of the persons present at the conference or the Romanian secretariat of the Bologna process.

[50] For the purpose of this dissertation *global financial crisis* will be used to refer to the construction of the problem around the collapse of world financial markets, credit crunch and the consequent measures undertaken by the private and public spheres. I did not further deconstruct this phenomenon and the discourse used in this context, since this would reach beyond the scope of the dissertation.

civil society - partners in the Bologna Process - brought up the problem which triggered a highly intensive coordinative process of discourse involving both the civil society and government representatives.

The draft communique had been almost finalised by the civil servants and secretariatwhen as in in Berlin (2003) part of the coordinative sphere re-opened the discussion at the meeting itself. The student representatives (ESU) wanted to highlight the centrality of the public responsibility for financing higher education. The amendment proposed by students opened up a formidable coordinative process bringing to the surface ideational elements that would have been otherwise not visible in the Bologna political and policy arena.

The amendment was drafted in the morning of the first official day, which was also the only day dedicated to the political document before the solemn adoption. The Education International (EI) and ESU and some other non-national actors in the Bologna Process (notably Council of Europe and EUA) have traditionally formed a sort of advocacy coalition around issues of common interest. This time ESU and EI were the proponents of the amendment, but it had to be submitted by a representative of a signatory country. This courtesy was offered by the Flemish minister through the Flemish student union. The amendment aimed at adding three words and thereby considerably changing the meaning of a sentence in the first section of the draft communique. The proposed new words are highlighted in this quotation:

> *With this in mind, we commit to securing the highest possible level of **public** funding for higher education, **while** drawing on **other** appropriate sources, as an investment in our future[51].*

The forum of ministers and other participants of the conference split into three groups to discuss the proposed draft. Students had the strategic advantage since they were represented both as a pan-European student organisation and in the single national delegation via the corresponding national student union. This increased the ESU's potential for coordinative action and was promptly used to convince the heads of national delegations to speak in favour of the so-called Flemish amendment. Eventually two out of three discussion groups agreed on the amendment while the third one did not. In this group two countries were decisively against favouring public funding over private sources: the UK (without Scotland) and Spain. One of the participants in the working group that altered the original amendment remembers:

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[51] The document of the amendment is a courtesy of Martina Vukasovic personal archive.

The initiative was taken by the UK Minister, who said that the important thing was that there was funding and not where the funding came from. There was quite a discussion in the group, in which a number of countries and also the Council underlined that importance of the principle of public funding under provisions that also included room for private funding. In particular Spain and Lithuania aligned with the UK. Belgium - Flemish Community somehow tried to work out a formula that went very far in the direction of the UK point of view and nobody quite understood why (Interview 12).

The UK institutional context for this position has been extensively explained above. The British[52] strategy of privatizing the financing and set out for the global competition has reached already far by 2012, while in Spain there was a heated debate on the financing reform oriented towards more private funding.

Thus, in a very short time the policy community saw a dramatic turn of events. The UK Minister (flanked by the Spanish representative) was determined to thwart the attempt of amending the communique in favour of public funding. He used his formidable foreground discursive abilities and succeeded in turning the tables. He persuaded the representative from Flanders to change the text of amendment (proposed by ESU) into:

*With this in mind, we commit to securing the highest possible level of funding for higher education **from public or other appropriate sources** as an investment in our future[53].*

The substantial content of the ESU amendment was thereby replaced by a different policy idea, and the opposite of what advocates of public funding intended. Not only was the advocacy group in favour of highlighting the role of public funding (notably ESU and EI) lost their amendment, they also lost the country which sponsored the amendment. Flanders had also turned the tables and lined up behind the new version of amendment worked out by the UK with the support of Spain.

But the battle was not over yet. During the coffee break new coalitions emerged. The aftermaths of the group sessions saw an intense coordinative action. During the break and in the plenary

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[52] The use of reference to "British" and the UK is not entirely correct in this context. Although officially listed as representing the UK, Minister of State for Universities and Science, David Willets, did not represent Scotland. Scotland appeared on the list of participants separately as "UK/Scotland", represented by Michael Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning.

[53] The amendment text was transcribed from a recorded electronic communication between students who participated the ministerial summit as members of national delegations and were coordinated by ESU representatives. Courtesy of interviewee 11.

room both persuasion and bargaining strategies were used. The UK was especially strong on the persuasive line, as it tried to convince the audience of the necessity for the UK-Spanish compromise. The representative of a Bologna consultative organisation remembers:

My hunch from the discussion in the group was that the amendment would carry the day. However, ESU mobilized very effectively through student members of the national delegation and it became clear that there would be enough delegations going for the original text for this to be adopted (Interview 12).

ESU had managed to strike a bargain with the EU Commission. The ESU representative remembers the sudden support of the EU Commission for the emphasis on public financing in the following way:

In the coffee break before the plenary I went to [the chief of the EU Commission delegation] *the Commission – the BFUG member – and asked him if he could support our original amendment instead of supporting the UK-Spanish compromise. He gave in to that on the condition that ESU spoke in favour of automatic recognition and also try to silence any critical member unions. Which we agreed to do and which was crucial to get the Commission support. We had some critical unions against the automatic recognition of degrees, for example the Swedish student union, which was worrying the Commission* (Interview 11).

The voice of the EU Commission was influential among a number of countries. By convincing the EU Commission to support the public funding statement, ESU gained persuasive momentum. But even that was not enough. In order for their wording to be carried, ESU needed to convince a country to speak in favour of rewriting the UK-Spanish compromise. The students' representatives worked hard in their respective national delegations and convinced them to speak against the UK-Spanish compromise or to not speak up if they were in favour:

I mean, for most of the delegations it did not really make much difference how the amendment stood, it was about details. It was more that the student representatives during the coffee break pushed an opinion upon the delegations or to make sure that the delegations had its own opinion … that it got a lot of attention or that they were let's say forced to speak out on this issue. And we then used the representatives quite actively during the sessions to change the text, although we would rather prefer the original amendment, the original text (interview 11).

After the coffee break the plenary session started with the unfolding of the "drama". The amendments only came to the table in the last part of the session. The UK minister spoke confidently and convincingly, supported by Spain[54]. The issue on public funding was debated in a long discussion where the civil society advocacy coalition for public financing had support especially in Nordic countries, notably Norway and Denmark. The Danish minister did not speak, but he chaired the session so that it would work in favour of the public funding bloc[55].

The plenary session revealed that all civil society actors in the Bologna Process were in support of public funding statement: EUA, ESU, EI and Council of Europe all took the floor in support of the clear priority given to public funding. In another dramatic turn of events, France took the initiative and offered to sponsor the 'public funding cause'. They proposed an amendment to the amendment. The French amendment was carried as the final compromise and became part of the solemnly adopted Bucharest communique:

> […] *we commit to securing the highest possible level of public funding for higher education and drawing on other appropriate sources, as an investment in our future* (Bucharest Communique 2012).

Analysis of the Bucharest coordinative action on public funding

The political action in the Bologna Forum once more revealed the ideational divisions over higher education in Europe. The issue raised by some of the consultative members of the Bologna Process (transnational civil society) triggered a heated debate and above all an intensive coordinative action. I argue that the UK (without Scotland) once again demonstrated its commitment to the cognitive ideas pertaining to the strategy of expanding the export of higher education and therefore considering it primarily a service business industry (as opposed to publicly funded institution). Keeping alive the normative idea on public responsibility and public funding represents an obstacle to the cross-border sales of the educational services of British universities.

Among the public funding advocates, the line-up was initially less strong but it evolved. Besides the listed civil society organisations, the Nordic countries and eventually France emerged and

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[54] A curiosity occurred during the discussion: After the speech of the UK minister, the Scottish head of delegation took the floor and explicitly distanced Scotland from the UK action. He assured other participants that Scotland would not support the UK-Spanish amendment.
[55] The Danish support for public funding was reported in the electronic communication between student representatives and remembered by the participants and the Danish representative to the BFUG.

joined the interactive process of coordinative discourse. The Nordic representatives (notably Norwegian and Danish) acted in line with their national normative background. Their action was anchored in the Nordic socio-economic model where higher firmly belongs to the public sector (Gornitzka and Maassen 2014, 34). This was the reason why they were quickly convinced into supporting the cause promoted by ESU.

The French delegation entered the game in the decisive moment and in an assertive way, led by a civil servant - the Director General for Higher Education. According to informants and interviewees (interview 11, 12, 14), he was ill prepared and unaware of the dynamics within the Bologna. This can be attributed to the fact that Bucharest meeting coincided with the period between the two presidential election rounds in France. However the activities of other members of French delegation opened the way forward for action. So even though he did not have a strong political mandate and despite the fact that he represented a conservative government, he acted decisively in an unexpected situation in opposing the conservative governments of UK and Spain. One of the members of French delegation remembered:

> *It was a surprise. Initially it was we who pushed him forward to support a modification of the statement, but then he took himself the initiative* [...] *What was very surprising to me was to see him, although he was mandated by a UMP government* [the interviewee uses this acronym for conservative]*, opposing the British and Spanish ministers* (interview 14).

The normative institutional background informed the action of French representative.as consistent with the French line in the previously presented cases within the Bologna Process, inputting forward the public responsibility for higher education against the privatisation and commodification line of the British globalisation strategy. Consistent with discursive institutionalism theory, the French Director General used his background ideational abilities and entered the interactive process of discourse aligning France with the advocacy coalition that defended the post-World-War II European normative framework.

The Bucharest on-site political interaction can be interpreted as one more case where (domestic) normative ideational background informed the French action. And yet again it was triggered in a tense situation in the European coordinative (policy) sphere putting France and UK in contention on the ideation of European integration (This is also coherent with the theorisations [?] of Crespy 2010; Schmidt 2012b; Hay and Rosamond 2002). The action of ESU and other

international civil society representatives i consistent with theorisations of agency informed by particular discursive and ideational abilities (as proposed by Schmidt (2008).

7.4 The summary of the cases and the significance of the Bologna forum confrontations on commodification of education for this study

The Bologna Process has provided rich empirical data. It offers a platform where an intense interactive process takes place and therefore represents a precious source for the research and interpretation of the ideas and meaning of higher education in the European region. In this chapter the analysis contributed to revealing various institutional contexts and ideational backgrounds running beneath the political and policy discourses in the normatively diverse Europe.

The analysis of the interactive process of discourse and the logic of communication in the Bologna Process reveals collision between two ideations of higher education. Intense coordinative action and discourse highlights the confrontational and antagonistic elements. The findings and interpretation contribute to underpinning the argument of a tacit, but yet advancing ideation of higher education as a commodity on the global market of services. However, this ideational pattern is not explicit. There is no agency explicitly promoting the comprehensive ideation of higher education as a tradable service, purchased through fees and provided by competitive corporatized universities (or other types of providers). Only thorough analysis of the logic of communication it is possible to interpret the discursive regularities underlying ideational patterns of ideating higher education as a market based service.

In the first ministerial documents (Sorbonne, Bologna and Prague) I interpreted a re-contextualisation of the idea of European integration based on common cultural identity and of the ideation of Europe as the anti-globalisation bastion. Both are overwhelmingly present in the French political sphere (Crespy 2010; Hay and Rosamond 2002; Schmidt 2012b), But this normative discourse came about in conjunction with a more pragmatic (cognitive) reasoning which viewed the Sorbonne meeting in part as an external constraint which could be used to bring about domestic reforms (Ravinet 2008). In both cases (and regardless the strategic political aim), the dominant discourse and the associated ideational dimension of the Sorbonne declaration is built on a distinctively normative ideational ground that is inspired by the French

elite vision of Europe of cultural identity and diversity. In other words, France entered the discursive interaction in the Bologna arena with a heavy historical path dependent and culturally/value conditioned institutional baggage, exacerbated by the perceived threat of the proliferation of the ideational and institutional platform from the English-speaking world.

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In this chapter I found additional underpinnings for the argument on three distinctive ideational streams underlying the European level discourses on higher education. The analysis of the intense interactive process of discourse and the substantive content of ideas reveals the ideation of higher education as a tradable service (1) in an antagonising relationship with a strong normative ideational stream invoking the cultural, democratic and other purposes of higher education (2). The relevance and magnitude of ideating higher education as a tradable service was not made explicit. It was only revealed once addressed by the agency (discursive action) of the opponents of such idea. They used their discursive abilities and acted informed by the background ideational abilities in their coordinative discourse. Their abilities were used to effect when they were attempting to promote the normative ideas originating in the national institutional backgrounds. If considering a larger ideational picture, the background ideational abilities were informed by institutional setting of liberal humanist Europe (see Chapter 10) and its national versions or in social democratic (egalitarian) tradition in the case of the Nordic countries. It is clear that the idea on higher education as a tradable service is accompanied also by shifts in material relations, especially in the lucrative transnational industry of higher education, and voiced by the exporting countries (see Chapter 11).

The ideation of higher education as a lucrative industry on a global market should be distinguished in my argument from ideating higher education as an engine of economic growth (3). The former ideational pattern treats higher education as a business sector, competing on a global market and de facto belonging to private sphere. In other words, higher education is increasingly imagined as yet another (self-standing) propulsive industry of the private sector. In the latter case higher education appears as an institution that assists the transformation of the economy towards more knowledge intensive activity which is believed to increase the competitiveness of the European region in global competition.. In this respect higher education remains of public interest and is ideated as an instrument of the government in steering the economic development within the imagined knowledge economy. The two ideations are running on the different planes or levels of generality. The first is mostly passive and happens

as a consequence of global trends (even if these stimulate the calculated policy preferences as in the UK), the second is a cognitive programmatic idea on how the public authorities should address the ideated problem of European economic decline on the global scale. Both ideational trends will be further theorised in part III of this dissertation.

8. EU, Europeanisation of higher education and knowledge society[56]

The modern policy initiatives and strategies, have taken the (expanded and massified) higher education policy beyond the nation-state boundaries, thereby creating new arenas of policy making. This is occurring in an era of a general shift in economic and social governance – not only in the domain of nation states, but increasingly dispersed other levels or scales. In the communicative discourse and on the declarative level, the internationalisation and Europeanisation of higher education remains in the hands of the member states. Yet, as some authors propose, it is possible to discern that the Europeanisation of higher education is profoundly European, both in terms of actors progressing these changes and in the overall purpose – to build a European region that is able to more effectively compete in the global economy (Robertson 2009a, 78).

Thus with the process of Europeanisation new political and policy arenas have emerged and are representing a new context for developing and communicating ideas, discourses and political rationales is affecting the course of higher education policies in Europe. Higher education has been part of the regionalisation processes and subject to the new ideations for more than a decade (Melo 2013). The institutions of the European Union (EU) are indeed an important source of such ideas and programmes within and beyond the Bologna Process, inspiring the reforms of higher education to serve the present and future of European society. In previous chapters I presented the interpretations that indicate an important role of the EU, especially the EU Commission in the communicative action in the coordinative sphere of the Bologna Process.

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[56] Parts of the chapter 8 were used in the article Komljenovič and Miklavič (2013)

Chapter 8 is dedicated to the dissection of EU as the venue of coordinative discursive process and the analysis of the discourses and ideas that originate or are articulated and promoted by the EU institutions, the institutional context and larger shifts in social forces that are underlying the continuity and change in ideating higher education.

8.1 Imagining Higher Education in the European Knowledge Economy: Discourse and Ideas in the EU Communication

This subchapter aims at analysing the political action and the communication within (and of) EU institutions and shed light on the underlying ideas and ideologies. The central question is which ideations and discursive meanings of higher education are presented by this EU discourse and to which extent higher education is becoming ideated as a European category. The EU Commission will be particularly closely examined in an attempt to interpret to what extent it is possible to attribute agency in the reconfiguration of social forces.

Field work and data collection

A good share of field work was dedicated to the collection and the analysis of the written trail of the European institutions' involvement with higher education. I examined the main higher education related documents of the EU Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament released since 2000. For the study in this chapter I carried out eleven interviews with various officials ranging from civil servants to external experts responsible for higher education or involved in the creation of the texts in the EU Commission and the Council of EU.

8.1.1 Positioning the EU in European higher education arena

Education policy was not on the European Community's policy portfolio on a substantial way until the 1970s. Even when timidly appearing on the agenda, it has been a very sensitive topic since it has been understood to be a matter of national sovereignty (Corbett 2005). There were attempts to raise the competence over higher education to the EU level, although they were never far-reaching. One example of the actions for the EU involvement in higher education that left a significant mark was the Erasmus Programme established in 1987 (Corbett 2006). This period was marked by drive

of the French president, Francois Mitterrand, the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl and the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors to relaunch European integration through the Single Market project (Corbett 2005, 10). The idea of a common market and the principle of competition as the integrative engine received a decisive impetus in the same period and has become gradually institutionalised (Thatcher 2013, 177). The idea of the common market implying the free movement of labour (mobility) and recognition of professional qualifications goes back to the origins of the EU as the European Economic Community (Treaty of Rome 1957). The involvement of the EU in higher education had gained momentum in the 1980s when it was seen as emblematic for that stage of the European integration, but more concretely with the creation of the Erasmus programme (Corbett 2005). This was topped up by a new dynamic in the early 1990s with Jacques Delors' call to modernise education and training systems connected to the challenges of employment (Pépin 2011, 25).

The member states had considerable reservations in letting the EU Commission take the initiative in the field of education, which were a reflection of the strong meaning ascribed to education and higher education in the national normative and value settings. For instance, the *Memorandum on Higher Education* (European Commission 1991) which underscored the dramatic importance of higher education for the economic future of the Community, triggered a heated reaction and fierce criticism in the higher education sector. The memorandum was contested for its mere economy-orientation and dismissed as neglecting the traditional social-cultural nature of higher education in Europe (Corbett 2011). Thereafter, the EU Commission acted prudently, dealing with lifelong learning but not expressly with higher education and thus for some years stayed at the fringes of European higher education policymaking (Gornitzka and Ravinet 2011, 16).

However the EU Commission was not the only actor viewing the need to Europeanise higher education. When the European ministers set out the Sorbonne and Bologna Process, the EU Commission was caught by surprise, was left out and then only allowed to fully enter the process in 2001 when the first evaluation showed that the Bologna Process had been too fragile without the support they could offer (Corbett 2011). Bologna became a policy venue where an intensive political action took place and where the coordinative and communicative discourses were generated in order to bring about the materialisation of cognitive ideas on higher education reform in the signatory states (see Chapter 4). Thereby, direct confrontation with the member states on the competence in the field was averted. Bologna has open the way for new ambitions and initiatives of the EU for higher education and contributed to the institutionalisation of certain routines, practices and identities in the European level policy arena (Gornitzka and Ravinet 2011, 21).

The implementation of Bologna policies in the member states has been encouraged by the substantial share of funds dedicated to support the projects that involved governments, their agencies and (notably) higher education institutions (Batory and Lindstrom 2011). One of the interviewed EU Commission's external experts argued that the Bologna Process was a project without a vision or strategy. In contrast, according to him, the EU policy offered clear policy goals in the context of larger strategic programme:

> *Bologna has no goals, no policy goals. Bologna is a tool to achieve something, but it has no goals of its own. The European Union had with Lisbon these ambitious goals in the area of – well, about the Europe of Knowledge in the world. And this has obvious consequences or it entails obvious actions in the area of higher education, education, training, research etc.* (Interview 24).

This alludes to another important decision taken in 2000, namely the Lisbon Strategy (Council of the EU 2000) whereby the EU set clear policy goals ultimately leading to the EU's global competitiveness and the strategy to achieve them. The imagined knowledge economy and society were brought into the centre of the policy discourse. The new programmatic initiative gave a decisive impetus to the enforcement of this economic and political imaginary, affecting the economic, political, social, historical and cultural conditions in the EU including the region of members to the east. The open method of coordination came as a new and effective regulatory tool at the supranational level of governance.

The attachment to the knowledge economy on the political level can be considered yet another step towards embedding higher education into the agenda of EU institutions. Despite the persisting tension regarding subsidiarity, the EU Commission managed to gradually institutionalise higher education in the subsequent years and created a self-standing policy domain, or as Gornitzka and Ravinet (2011, 22) put it: *a new European governance arena*.

Thus, from its marginal role in the 1990s, the EU Commission became a major actor on the European higher education policy stage in the 2000s, especially through participation in the all-European inter-governmental initiative of the Bologna Process, new modes of governance (such as the open method of coordination) and new institutionalised governance structures.

More than a decade of policy documents emerging from EU institutions present an impressive trail of EU political action and thus offer a suitable ground for the engagement of the discursive institutionalism. For heuristic purposes I synthesised the findings from analysing the EU

Commission logic of communication and discursive action into three (inequivalent) categories of ideational content. They are:

1. instrumentalisation of higher education for economic goals;

2. ideating the new governance and steering of higher education; and

3. ideational and normative convergence – towards new constitutionalism.

8.1.2 The instrumentalisation of higher education for economic goals

As mentioned above, the decisive signal for the EU's intervention in the sector came when higher education was recognised as one of the most important policy fields for achieving the knowledge society envisaged in the Lisbon Strategy (European Council 2000). The underlying idea of the Lisbon Strategy is to boost the European economy and guarantee strong economic competitiveness by placing knowledge in the core of the economic activities (Nokkala 2007, Gornitzka 2010; Serrano-Velarde 2011). Thus, despite the subsidiary principle, higher education was essentially integrated into the grand idea of economic competitiveness of the EU. In other words, with the consent of the European Council higher education turned out to be an essential means for reaching wider European social and economic objectives. Lisbon agenda acted as a strong catalyst for still embryonic EU level higher education policy by increasing its visibility and legitimacy on the European agenda (Serrano-Velarde 2011, 8).

Already since the communication of 2003 (EU Commission 2003), *Europe of knowledge* appears as an abstract narrative oriented towards a better future and an ideational project in which universities are the essential and central instruments. Intervention into the hitherto protected status of the university is justified as [the universities] "*live thanks to substantial public and private funding*". Serving society is understood as propelling the economic competitiveness, thus contributing to the Lisbon Strategy. The flow of (applied) *knowledge from universities into business and society* is the dominant discursive topic. The idea of approximating *industry* or *enterprise* and university is strongly exposed throughout the text. Various modes of this interface are proposed (spin offs, start-up companies, attracting talents from other regions, more and employable graduates, innovation).

In the following document of 2005 entitled *Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: Enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon strategy* (EU Commission 2005), the universities are said to be "*motors of the new, knowledge-based paradigm*". It is obvious from this document that there is agency and cognitive/instrumental logic in the constructing of ideas. There is a notable inclination towards more economistic key terminology (e.g. knowledge sector, knowledge industry, investment, competitiveness, human capital). The discursive topic of university–industry approximation is reiterated and refined with the specification of policy aims: a) applied knowledge; and b) the employability of graduates. There is a gradual advance in the policy proposals crossing into the academic domain, notably addressing the organisation of learning, arguing for output-based curricula, interdisciplinarity, emphasising transversal skills, calling for entrepreneurialism etc.

Both of the above mentioned communications (EU Commission 2003 and 2005) elaborated on the many problems within European higher education and gave the contextual legitimacy for the presented policy and programmatic ideas. The discourse was underpinned by the continuous argument of the need for the EU to compete with other world regions. The ideated problems that call for a solution were encapsulated in the narrative of the *changing world* and the implied assumptions on the *poor state of European universities*.

The appropriateness of the tone used in the persuasive discourse suggesting the need to adjust universities to the constraints of time and the hybrid discourse of combining the concepts of economic growth and social inclusion can be interpreted as a part of the normalisation strategy - an attempt to build a normative background in order to present the ideas as appropriate. However, the cognitive/instrumental component of the discourse was much stronger, justifying the presented course of action as a rational, necessary and feasible solution to the outlined challenges. The problem definition was reframed in more urgent terms in the Kok Report[57] that was used as a basis for the reinvigoration of the Lisbon strategy five years after its launch. Based on Kok's evaluation of the materialisation of the Lisbon strategy, the new sense of urgency (Robertson 2008) with notions of subliminal threats, inevitability and obligation of the universities to change came in the discourse in 2005:

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[57] http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/fp6-evidence-base/evaluation_studies_and_reports/evaluation_studies_and_reports_2004/the_lisbon_strategy_for_growth_and_employment__report_from_the_high_level_group.pdf (16.5.2015)

Universities failing to undertake these changes – for want of drive, power to act or available resources – will create a growing handicap for themselves, their graduates and their countries (EU Commission 2005).

Following this assertion, the EU decided to strengthen the role of higher education in reaching the Lisbon objectives. Another communication on higher education followed swiftly (EU Commission 2006b). The previously introduced *knowledge triangle* appeared already in the title. The attractiveness of European higher education became the central concept used in the argument of competing with other higher education systems and institutions in order to improve the European ones. The discursive construction of the argument is completed by the key word *excellence* which emerges from *competition* and ensures *attractiveness*.

By using the term *relevance* as a new discursive element, the concept of *public interest* was strategically linked to the responsiveness of universities to the demands of the economy. It is assumed that "*their* [universities'] *relationship with the business community is of strategic importance and forms part of their commitment to serving the public interest*" (EU Commission 2006b). One of the authors of the document presented the core idea with the following thoughts:

> […] *higher education is not something that functions in an abstraction of society. Higher education needs to function within society and to make its contribution to society, not just expect support from society for professors to do whatever they want without any reference to society* (Interview 24).

In the same communication, the EU Commission further advanced the policy proposals (the modernisation agenda) aiming at the academic domain and micro level, which have traditionally been the autonomous responsibility of the academic community:

> *In order to overcome persistent mismatches between graduate qualifications and the needs of the labour market, university programmes should be structured to enhance directly the employability of graduates and to offer broad support to the workforce more generally. […] development of entrepreneurial, management and innovation skills should become an integral part of graduate education, research training and lifelong learning strategies for university staff* (EU Commission 2006b).

It emerged from the interviews that this formed part of a continuous attempt to strengthen the communicative discourse and break through the established academic insulation from the interests of business and industry. The discourse of the civil servants at the DG EAC contained a strong

element of conviction about the necessity and appropriateness to link higher education closer to the economic growth:

In terms of is it a more instrumentalist or is it a – I don't like the term instrumentalism. Perhaps I – is it more – Is it more tied to education's role in driving economic growth and the regeneration of our societies, more plainly, more concretely, more overtly? Absolutely. Absolutely yes. And I don't think we should be ashamed of that. I don't think it's a bad thing. And I don't think it then means that everyone has to become engineers, for example (Interview 17).

The idea extended to the economic needs of individuals:

The university has the main role which students expect – the universities to perform for them is to give them the key to society. And the key to society passes through an economic activity (Interview 24).

Among other things, here the controversy regarding use of the concept of autonomy is visible, which in the EU Commission's case was devised for reasons other than protecting the academic world from external pressures (see Chapter 11.1.6.).

In 2009 the EU Commission released a communication specifically dedicated to the cooperation between Business and universities: *The EU Forum for University Business dialogue* (EU Commission, 2009). It recalled the previous documents, but focused mainly on the policy measures and solutions that would answer the need to make universities relevant to the business and somehow integrate the sectors. It urges that: *enterprises could help universities to reshape curricula, governance structures and contribute to funding*. This marked a further step in the direction of concretisation of policy and programmatic ideas. The global economic downturn represented a new legitimising argument for a decisive engagement with re-starting of the economic growth.

A more substantial discursive evolution can be found in the 2011 communication (EU Commission 2011a). Jobs became a central discursive item, appearing in syntaxes like *job creating, high qualification jobs, knowledge intensive jobs, growth and jobs, research jobs, matching skills and jobs*. The discourse lost a little of its academic character. Instead it gained technical and political weight and apparently aiming at a system instead of institutions. Human capital theory seems to particularly strongly underpin this text, especially with the argument of more graduates (more

knowledge workers) for more knowledge jobs. The efficiency and performance sit at the base of the discourse as the ultimate legitimising support.

The above analysis shows the strong drift of higher education and research to the centre of the European integration project. Higher education reform seems to have become one of Europe's answers to the challenges of the global knowledge economy. The *horizontal dynamics of the Lisbon strategy* contributed to the growing focus on higher education institutions as instruments for a range of policy sectors (Gornitzka 2010, 545).

According to sociological institutionalists, this phenomenon accompanies the change of structures, norms, practices and identities eventually resulting in a redefinition of the purpose of the policy field (Gornitzka 2010; Gornitzka 2009). In terms of discursive institutionalism, it is possible to interpret a high level of discursive and ideational activity in the direction of normalisation of problem defining cognitive ideas. The narrative revolves around the rational way forward in order to cope with the economic challenges of the region in the competitive global economic scene.

The discourse of normalisation of the cognitive ideas on how universities should contribute to the competitiveness of the region is sometimes accompanied also by the discourse of social inclusion and public responsibilities (e.g. EU Commission 2005). But it is nevertheless incorporated in a sort of hybrid discourse whereby public good and social concerns become an integral part of the economic growth and new jobs discourse (Serrano-Velarde 2011, 9). However, in the discourse of the EU it is not possible to interpret the counterbalancing of concepts and ideas to the extent as it was the case in the Bologna Process texts (see Chapter 4).

The discourse on knowledge economy had prevailed in the text and came to represent the integrative paradigm of the EU. The powerful programmatic idea of "the Europe of knowledge" wiped out a number of other ideas, discourses and institutional backgrounds. The overall standardising philosophy behind the EU Commission's proposals reveals the cognitive ideational orientation legitimised by the discourse of performativity - the need of response to the needs of society. C*ompetitiveness* and the *Europe of knowledge* can be interpreted as a comprehensive concept of control in a form of integrated political programme safeguarding a strategic orientation articulated by the networks of experts and corresponding to the spirit of time).[58]

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[58] The nature and origins of the concept of Knowledge economy is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 12.

8.1.3 Ideating a new governance model and the steering of higher education

The out-datedness of the universities and higher education system was another problem identified and portrayed as a programmatic level idea that needed an urgent response in the form of "modernisation" of universities. The discourse of the EU Commission was very straight forward in bringing up this ideated problem and thereby opening the ground for normalisation of policy ideas on the "modernisation" of European universities[59].

The modernisation of governance structure and financing in conjunction with the revision of the concept of autonomy emerged as well established discursive regularities in the EU Commission's communicative and coordinative discourses. The discursive strategy was built on providing legitimacy and substantiating the notion of necessity, inevitability and urgency as well as advocating the hitherto unfitness of European universities. They were portrayed as ossified institutions that function in an old and outdated fashion rooted in the institutionalised ideas and context of the 19th century (EU Commission 2003). Further on, the characterising of the outdated situation presented the egalitarian principle as an obstacle to delivering excellence by keeping the institutions in *mediocrity* (EU Commission 2005). Especially in the first half of the decade, the term *excellence* became the key word – an undefined concept that stood for the ultimate direction of the reforms. In this narrative, the reference to US universities has been a constant discursive element.

As stated in the previous section, the argumentative device of the necessity for the response of universities to the needs of society culminated in the normative assertion about the duty and obligation of the university towards society. This argumentative device is increasingly amplified throughout the analysed paper trail:

> *After remaining a comparatively isolated universe for a very long period, both in relation to society and to the rest of the world, with funding guaranteed and a status protected by respect for their autonomy, European universities have gone through the second half of the 20th-century without really calling into question the role or the nature of what they should be contributing to society* (EU Commission 2003).

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[59] The EU Commission's discourse was not as original as it might appear because of its overwhelming presence in the European policy sphere. More on this in chapter 12.

The principal idea in terms of responding to the problems identified by the EU Commission was to diversify the European higher education system; there should be different higher education institutions with regard to the focus on the groups of potential students, the study offer, the way of teaching etc. More importantly, each university was expected to find its own strength and focus on it, thus specialising in the identified fields.

Besides diversification of the educational provision, vertical differentiation (hierarchy) seems accepted as the necessary way to develop the system. In the second half of the decade, the idea of egalitarianism was overridden by the idea of vertical diversification and categorisation. The relevance of the institutions was divided between global research-oriented universities and regional teaching and professionally-oriented ones. This solution is normatively reinforced with the recognition that Europe has too few universities excelling at the global level. The *topoi* of competitiveness are grounded in the arguments of the poor positioning of European universities in world rankings and lagging behind their US counterparts. In fact the idea on the vertical diversification and fostering the development of excellence corresponds to the system level distribution of university types in the US. In the latter the vertical hierarchy is closely linked to the breadth of access (Marginson 2008).

The EU Commission did not hesitate to advance far-reaching policy proposals in the fields of funding and quality assurance – the two strongest steering mechanisms of the higher education system. Integral to rearranging the system, funding mechanisms are supposed to be geared towards diversification, i.e. to concentrate funding on a chosen institution and/or fields, as well as to move towards greater *efficiency, quality* and *competitiveness*. For this, the multiyear contracts setting out agreed strategic objectives were the preferred funding model for the EC. Thus, the funding system was suggested to change from basic funding towards outcomes-based, competitive and relevance rewarding:

> *Encourage the use of skills and growth projections and graduate employment data (including tracking graduate employment outcomes) in course design, delivery and evaluation, adapting quality assurance and funding mechanisms to reward success in equipping students for the labour market* (EU Commission 2011a).

The funding of higher education was expected to increase, notably funding from private sources (i.e. industry and students). In advocating tuition fees, the EU Commission brought forward the ideas of private funding as an adequate and inevitable replacement of the unsustainable and hence

retracting public funding which fits with the neoliberal grand idea of reforming the state (Harvey 2005, Hill 2007 and Schmidt and Thatcher 2013).

Institutional autonomy is strongly present, with a specific discursive role and meaning. In the earliest of the analysed EU documents (EU Commission 2003), the strong ideational stream on reforming the institutional governance emerged. It was characterised by referring to the argument of accountability as opposed to the relative autarchic forms of European universities in the past. In 2003, autonomy still appeared as an ambiguous concept. Two years later, institutional autonomy became: "*a pre-condition for universities to be able to respond to society's changing needs*" (EU Commission 2005). The idea was communicated with a persuasive strategy of portraying the national regulations as exaggerated and inappropriate interference with the universities' ability to make the necessary changes, manage funds and especially enable the process of diversification. Thus, the concept of autonomy is coupled with the perceived need to deregulate the higher education systems.

The concept of autonomy was clearly seen by the EU Commission as an essential element of the communicative discourse bringing forward the cognitive idea of new governance. The governance structure was explained in ever more detail:

> *This requires new internal governance systems based on strategic priorities and on professional management of human resources, investment and administrative procedures. It also requires universities to overcome their fragmentation into faculties, departments, laboratories and administrative units and to target their efforts collectively on institutional priorities for research, teaching and services. Member States should build up and reward management and leadership capacity within universities* (EU Commission 2006a).

In the EU Commission discourse, autonomy refers to professionalised central management strategically running an integrated institution rather than autonomy as the protection of academic freedom and critical thought. We thus see a shift in external dependency from one field (political or legal) to another (markets, stakeholders, ranking entities etc.). Universities were expected to change in line with the New Public Management principles to become more efficient, productive and economically relevant (Bleiklie and Lange 2010; Olssen and Peters 2005). In its communication, the EU Commission also tried to balance its discourse of managerial shift by retaining references to the concept of autonomy as autonomy from the state and politics, thereby

attempting to resuscitate something traditional or symbolic about the European university and introducing an appropriateness (normative) tone.

The conceptualisation of autonomy represented an integral part of the hegemonic economic imaginary containing reforms in line with a trend often referred to as the *neoliberal project* (Hartmann 2008, Hill 2007). A new kind of *social contract* emerged, shifting the focus to the strategic orientation of the system as a whole, evaluating the outcomes and avoiding micro-management and over-regulation (see Chapter 11.1.6).

8.1.4 Ideational and normative convergence – towards new constitutionalism

As above, the ideas pertaining to the knowledge economy hegemonic imaginary indicate a tendency to shift power to the supranational level which the EU Commission's documents do not explicitly announce. It is communicated through the argument that the global/regional level of social and economic problems require regional (supranational) solutions:

> *The nature and scale of the challenges linked to the future of the universities mean that these issues have to be addressed at European level. More specifically, they require a joint and coordinated endeavour by the Member States and the candidate countries, backed up and supported by the European Union, in order to help to move towards a genuine Europe of knowledge* (EU Commission 2003).

In addition, higher education is compared to other economic sectors:

> *The EU has supported the conversion process of sectors like the steel industry or agriculture; it now faces the imperative to modernise its 'knowledge industry' and in particular its universities* (EU Commission 2005).

During the years of the increasing Europeanisation of higher education, one can observe the tendency to shift some regulatory competencies for higher education to the supranational level. The result of these activities and initiatives has been an increasing supranational soft regulation such as harmonising criteria/standards, setting guidelines and producing comparative figures. In other words, it was up to nation-states and single higher education institutions to regulate and govern higher education reform on their territory, but they do so in accordance with the guidelines,

objects and procedures that are regulated on the European level, even though this is voluntary (Fairclough and Wodak 2008: 113).

Moreover, the open method of coordination used in the Lisbon Strategy was also transferred into the practice of the Bologna Process (Ravinet 2008). With its expertise and financial resources, the EU Commission accelerated its advance into higher education policy field – both through the Bologna Process and parallel to it. Namely, the EU Commission had a substantial budget available to incentivise the domestic actors and thereby turn them into agents of its policy and programmatic proposals, causing higher education institutions to leapfrog the national governments in complying with the EU Commission's requirements (Batory and Lindstrom 2011, 311). It has gradually developed policy making and policy implementation networks formed by national and independent experts, civil servants, various agencies on the national and international level, which has led to the diluting of individual state power over policy outcomes in higher education (Gornitzka 2009).

Quality assurance is an exemplary initiative in this sense. It has been present as the EU Commission's central policy stream in the field of higher education since the second half of the 1990s, and notably since the Berlin communiqué (2003) also through the Bologna Process with the support for networking of various actors and quality regimes (Gornitzka 2009, 122). The establishment of the European network of quality assurance agencies (ENQA) was the EU Commission's idea and represented a front-running initiative for the essential role of the concept of quality assurance in the Bologna Process. The idea evolved further through the adoption of European standards and guidelines in quality assurance (2005) and later culminated in the European register for quality assurance (EQAR). The Bucharest communique (2012) favours the agencies listed in the EQAR to perform activities across the EHEA. The networks and soft regime created in this way may come to represent a challenge to national ministerial control regardless the degree to which they might be (or not) influenced by the EU Commission (Gornitzka 2009, 124).

The quality assurance policy evolution in the EU and the Bologna Process indicates a transition from soft law to supranational provisions with strong enforcement mechanisms continuously enhancing the consensus among governments and stakeholders – a clear case of a trajectory leading towards the transnationalisation of the evaluative state (Hartmann 2008: 82). Even though the idea was limited to the policy level and addressed concrete problems, the interviews revealed the temptation of the authors to push the argument of the need for an international referee:

We wanted something outside the country but within a quality assurance framework that
was capable of saying to the Greeks or the Italians or whoever. 'You aren't doing these

well enough, you should be tougher with people because they are not actually producing what they should.' No, we didn't get that because of course the member states didn't want it. But that's what lies behind it, an attempt to assure the quality of the quality assurance agencies (Interview 20).

The same logic revolved around the so-called "transparency and information tools". The first outstanding one was the qualification framework, which followed the logic of supporting the integration of the EU labour market by informing employers about the learning outcomes of graduates and easing students' choice of learning paths. A similar motive can be found in another, more recent example: the classification of universities and the multidimensional transparency tool (called *U-Multirank*) devised to respond to the growing popularity and influence of global university ranking initiatives. I returned to the U-Multirank at the end of Chapter 8 and more extensively in Chapter 11.3.1.

The instruments and mechanisms described here indicate the strong presence of an overall standardising philosophy which inexorably interferes with the regulatory competences over higher education and alter the nature and status of higher education. The trend of multiplication and strengthening of soft regulation, networks and regimes is not uncommon in the literature on EU integration. Some authors use the term *new constitutionalism* to refer to a process whereby regulatory powers are ceded (or being taken up) to the supranational governance level in order to facilitate the implementation of policies and institutional change or to secure a certain course of policy action which would not be possible under democratic authorities of the states (Gill 2003a, Scherrer 2005; Hartmann 2008). Further theorising on new constitutionalism can be found in Chapter 11.3.2.

The new constitutional trend discerned and presented in this chapter is limited to the institutions and policy and programmatic ideas that reflect in the soft laws and regimes. In Chapter 9 I presented trends that reach way beyond the soft regulatory powers and indicate a more substantial shift towards new constitutionalism.

8.2 The generation, coordination and articulation of the ideas on higher education: EU coordinative sphere of discourse

In this section I drew mainly on the data I have collected over the period of the PhD/ over 3 years to illustrate where and how and by whom the ideas and discourses are generated within the structure and decision making process of the EU. Earlier in this chapter I interpreted the discourse and associated ideas presented by the EU Commission. This chapter aims at dissecting the EU as the policy sphere (coordinative venue) and the associated logic of communication in order to interpret the origin and nature of the EU's ideas and discourses on higher education referenced here.

As concluded above the coordinative and communicative discourse in the case of analysed texts does not reflect directly the superiority of the idea of common market and competition principles. Instead of the straight forward use of the market discourse it uses the discourse marked by the term *competitiveness* and the idea of the use of higher education for economic purposes. While in Chapter 9 I shall present the interplay between the market departments of the EU Commission and the ECJ in institutionalising the market related ideas and advancing regulation, in this Chapter I have focused on the policy process driven by the Directorate General Education, Audiovisual and Culture (DG EAC), responsible also for higher education, its interaction with other EU institutions, the venues where the discourse is generated or articulated, the actors involved, their discursive and ideational abilities and the policy action directly concerning higher education as a policy field.

8.2.1 Coordinative sphere and the articulation of discourse of the EU documents

The EU Commission communications of 2003, 2005 and 2006 were jointly developed by high ranking DG EAC officials and experts. According to the account of two interviewed experts and one DG official from that period, the texts of these communications were predominantly the result of intra-EU Commission coordination. The experts and civil servants involved in the actual drafting were only a few, usually around 4-6. Hence, the drafting of the policy documents

was marked by handful of individuals engaged in a considerable degree of policy entrepreneurialism.

The key authors of the texts of the early 2000s had not been all involved in the processes related to higher education to the same degree. One of them has been present on the European higher education scene throughout the 1990s in various posts, including the organisations of civil society, and had a significant role in drafting the Bologna declaration of 1999. Another important individual in the coordinative sphere was the Director for Education[60] (civil servant) who contributed to the process with his experience with the mechanisms, institutions, practices. The Director General for at the DG EAC was instead inexperienced in the field of education but was personally very motivated to bring higher education forward to the front of political agenda part of the economic performance of Europe. His subordinate remembered:

He decided that we had to get education generally, but higher education in particular accepted as an integral part of all the progress towards 2010 and towards the Europe of Knowledge [...] he didn't actually know anything about education, but he knew a great deal about the politics and about the way the Commission worked and about what you can get through the Council and what not (interview 20).

The coordinative discursive circle was sometimes extended to the more active permanent representatives responsible for education at the Council of the EU and the individual experts from the national ministries, who tended to be constantly present in the expanding international higher education community:

Because of the numerous meetings that you have, you meet within the Erasmus committee. You meet within the education committee. You meet within the Bologna Process. I meet some of the people while sitting on the high council in France. There is also that informal network that should not be underestimated (Interview 16).

In short it is possible to conclude about two phenomena in the coordinative process leading to the EU policy documents on higher education. The document writing, negotiating, persuading, bargaining etc., was predominantly conducted by motivated individuals or in the limited size of the policy circle. Both phenomena appeared throughout the 2000s and match with the Schmidt's conceptualisation of the coordinative sphere of discourse. Namely, according to

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[60] The position had been renamed during his service, but in the period between 2000 and 2006 he was inter alia responsible for higher education.

Schmidt (2008, 310) the coordinative discourse is often in the domain of individuals loosely connected in *epistemic communities* or more strongly linked into advocacy coalitions, discourse coalitions, advocacy networks, but it can also be in the domain of individuals as policy entrepreneurs or mediators (see Chapter 2.4.3.).

The group bound into the epistemic community around the EU Commission was fluid and pending on the specific period of time. It was formed by civil servants and experts but also by external individuals, such as national civil servants and experts. In these circles the coordinative discourse is articulated.

The coordinative discourse and the agents' discursive abilities

Because of the configuration of institutions and the role of the member states, the liberty of entrepreneurial individuals and epistemic communities for drafting the papers was however limited. The machinery and the procedures were complex and filled with filters that would not let things through. The officials were well aware of these limitations, and actively phrased things in a way to avoid confrontation with the member states. These actors gradually sharpened their sensitivity and ability to coordinate the ideas and formulate an appropriate communicative discourse without diluting the coordinated ideational essence of it.

In his account, one of the former high ranking civil servants of the DG EAC interviewed recounted in detail how the negotiation, bargaining and coordination occurred between the DG EAC, the permanent representations and the Council meetings. The strategies were meticulously elaborated and the discourse was taken care of with great dedication:

> *[...] when you work in an institution like the Commission, you have an idea of what you can get through the machine, so you write as a function of what you can get through the machine. [...] nothing was left in that we didn't think could go through. And Mr. Van der Pas had a very sensitive ear for this sort of thing and he was very good as saying: "let us write this slightly differently so that it will not appear so threatening."* (Interview 20).

This deliberate discursive activity tells us about the degree of agency involved in the coordinative process from the side of EU Commission officials. It reflects their tactics in the communicative action in the policy sphere and the awareness of the power of discourse and the potential controversy of the ideas carried with it. All the interviewees that worked for the EU Commission's as civil servants or experts demonstrated a high degree of what Schmidt (2008,

314) calls foreground discursive abilities in navigating through the institutions and procedures and co-opting the decision makers who might undermine the adoption of the documents.

The awareness of the potential resistance in the member states, originating in the respective institutional backgrounds (see Chapter 7) was clear also from the coordinative action between DG EAC experts and officials and the member states' ministries. They used their informal channels to contact the official of ministries in order to detect the sensitive issues and the political climate among the member states in the run up to the EU Council meetings. In this way the authors additionally minimised the risks of the intrusiveness of the policy proposals and cause the reactions that had been seen in the past (e.g. in 1991 Memorandum on higher education):

> *I had a contact with the German ministry. I had contacts in the British ministry, in the Italian ministry, etc. And so, when I had an idea, I also discussed it but very informally with university teachers, with ministerial offices, with international offices, with people I met at the Erasmus committee, and at the education committee because I was always there. This is the way that it happened, but there was no organized consultation process [...] I had my antennas and knowledge obtained was good enough to know where the limit was, so I never felt frustrated because there is one thing I really wanted to put in and could not put in. I actually put in everything I thought was important enough to write it down, explaining it [...] So there was probably not a self-censorship but a self-awareness of how far we could go* (Interview 24).

8.2.2 The discursive strategy and the ideational agenda –DG EAC as coordinative site and agent

Thus, the DG EAC officials' used their foreground discursive abilities in order to advance the policy and programmatic ideas during the coordinative phase, but also in the communicative phase of the policy process. This partially supports the interpretations from the Chapter 4. According to those, the EU Commission influenced the course of the Bologna Process in the direction of the programmatic ideas that dominated the EU agenda at the time.

To what extent it is possible to talk about the EU Commission as the agent? The interpretations of this study suggest agency of the EU Commission in promoting the ideas that it has so well-

articulated through its documents on higher education (see Chapter 8.1). The conversation with the officials confirmed a high level of strategic planning and determination in securing the ideated course of policies. A high ranking EU Commission civil servant described the EU Commission's strategic action and navigation in the coordinative sphere with the following words:

> *However, so far as inside the commission is concerned, there was only one political game going on, and that was the general game about the Europe of knowledge. So the director general for EAC [...], who was used to working at a very high political level, either being in the Delors cabinet, in being commission spokesman, in being the director who negotiating enlargement with quite a lot of countries. [...] He decided that we had to get higher education generally, but also higher education in particular accepted as an integral part of all the progress towards 2010 and towards the Europe of Knowledge.*

> *And he thought there were two ways of doing that. One was to make what contribution we could make to Bologna process and to push back and forth. And the other was to make sure that through a series of documents, the Commission managed to push forward in terms of internal Union [EU] projects, which Bologna obviously wasn't, the necessity to invest more heavily in higher education and to change the structures so that universities could get on with what they were supposed to do [...]* (Interview 20).

So, the EU Commission elaborated a rationale supporting the strategic action in the Bologna policy arena. The entrance into Bologna was propelled by a clear aim to align it with its own strategic agenda labelled the Europe of Knowledge. In case of failure, the backup plan envisaged a direct action in the member states. The latter was implemented mainly through the direct financing of various projects and programmes that fit the chosen ideational direction and the pertaining policy action (Batory and Lindsrom 2011).

However it would be reductionist to attribute the penetration of the economic discourse into the Bologna texts only to the activity of the EU Commission. To a great extent it can be attributed to the shifts in the equilibrium of social forces that had an impact on the ideational context of the process.

The origin and articulation of ideas and discourse in the EU

While there is no doubt that we can find the architects of the communicative and coordinative discourses on higher education within the EU Commission, it is nevertheless not possible to

conclude that all the ideas coordinated in the epistemic community around the EU Commission also originated there. Other international organisations were vocal about some crucial above presented ideas earlier. One of the national representatives interviewed with a long experience in the field of higher education (dating back to the early 1990s) recalled:

The first real definitions of what university autonomy and efficiency is were made within OECD in 2000, 2001, 2002. And the Commission came much later on. The commission has very often – as we say, "Lots of British jump into the train." The train has been moving, had left the station and the Commission jumped on to it, gave it therefore more momentum, gave it more means, but the ideas did not necessarily originate within the Commission (Interview 16).

Here we can again witness a larger scale of forces in play, not necessarily coming from one centre of power. The hegemonic imaginary of globalised knowledge economy transcends the sites of governance and blurs the origin of ideas and consequently challenges the existence of agency in generating the programmatic and policy ideas. Like OECD also the EU institutions become the sites of reworking the ideas that are not the product of one site or group but are the reflection of something larger (see Chapter 12). Within the analytical framework devised for this dissertation, this seemingly origin-less ideational hegemony was theorised in part III as integral to the historical configuration of social forces – or in other words a sort of spirit of time.

Role and choice of the experts

During the field research and gathering of data it was also curious how the EU Commission used the experts that contributed to the drafting process. In discussions with fellow researchers I heard accounts on how the results of EU funded research projects were not published in full. In the earlier part of the period analysed it was clear that the experts were chosen by the senior staff of DG EAC, sometimes also in accordance with the strategic action:

[...] *what we attempted to do was to try to bring in people who I thought would be good, whom I met outside, whom I thought were good.* [...] *The Germans, I got the Germans to pay for [removed the name] by arguing that we didn't know enough inside the commission about the German system. And it was a very big German system and I wanted somebody who could reflect it in there, which was true* (Interview 20).

Another interviewee described the choice of experts for the 2011 communication again as an internal and arbitrary act of the staff:

We choose them primarily through knowledge of the sector. So it was here we came up with ideas about who could participate in this – at this level and we also wanted to have a diversity of different perspectives, so not just people from higher education, not just university people (interview 17).

The selection of these experts indicates that the filtering of input was based on civil servants' perception of what is useful and who has the appropriate expertise and experience on the subject matter. The action of the civil servants was conditioned by the dominant ideas, based in the necessity argumentative line. The crucial dilemma that this brings about is whether the experts brought new insights or were selected only for legitimising the cognitive ideas that the coordinative sphere of the EU already set into motion with the policy programmes such as the Lisbon strategy.

The civil servants interviewed often came across as deeply convinced of the appropriateness and the inevitability of the proposed course of action for the good cause. A DG EAC official active in the late 2000s, up to and during the interview (2012) accounted for the intra EU Commission coordinative action with the following words:

So it was quite a long and intense process of making sure that as much as we possibly could, we coordinated with the other colleagues in the Commission who were working on these various themes, that either we could tap in to something that they potentially have to offer for the modernization of higher education, or that we make them aware of this policy-wise what we say is important that universities do, for example, to make sure that we are aligned as much as possible (Interview 17).

In this segment the EU Commission official accounted for internal liaison and coordination process, but the discourse also indicates the 'taking for granted' of the idea on the universities as instruments. The way of arguing namely implies the importance of the Universities' output or in the interviewee's words: *what is important that universities do*. This attitude towards the universities was common among most of the interviewees in the EU Commission and it was done in a normalised tone – as a given or taken for granted view.

Language, polishing and the "holding of the pen"

During the field enquiry I came across another interesting dimension of the coordination and formation of the discourse which is worth mentioning in this paper: The drafting of the text and language polishing.

There are various rounds of drafting and refining the language, making sure that we have the messages we want to have (Interview 17).

One of the interviewees (active in the late 2000s) expressed his personal opinion and gave the account on British influence in the DG EAC texts. He claimed that the civil servants from the UK are very commonly assigned to draft and correct the documents on the argument of native language, which according to him often turns out to be crucial in shaping the discourse, and the emphasis:

I mean, now you could say that's such a Neo-liberal way of the commission brain. I mean, it starts with bubbles or starts with the Sec Gen. It starts with whatever, yeah. The masterminds of – the people that do the policy papers here and the English paper are mostly written by Brits. It is like this because they can write and they don't exactly know what they mean, but they – I mean, growth is pretty clear from this background, yeah. But I do disagree to this. I also say it – or actually I don't say anything when I'm representing the commission. But I think it's wrong only to speak about growth, but they will learn (Intervew 19).

This claim resonates even more strongly when it is taken into consideration that in the period I have examined (2000 - 2011) at least four British nationals held leading positions in terms of responsibility for higher education and two of them emerged as crucial in development of the EU Commission's communications[61].

There is not enough evidence to conclude about the UK intention to place its diplomats and civil servants strategically in order to influence the EU Commission's policy output in higher education. What is possible to suggest is that the transfer from a domestic institutional background and policy arena should not be neglected when examining the influences on the creation of the discourse in the EU coordinative sphere. In the case of higher education in the DG EAC it was possible to detect a significant influence of the British officials on the formation of the discourse, notably in the phase of articulation of the text. However I cannot claim that the discourse would have been radically different in the absence of this effect.

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[61] The source of this information is scattered. We obtained it from a combination of web sites and accounts of informants and interviewees.

8.2.3 The Role of the other EU institutions and the member states

After all this stages the proposal is adopted by the EU Commission and goes to the European Parliament and Council of the EU. The education committees of the Parliament and Council of the EU put this on the agendas of the responsible bodies for higher education. According to the drafters of the communications interviewed, there is hardly ever any reaction or remark on the content of the EU Commission's papers at this stage. As presented above, most of the coordinative action, negotiation, persuasion, etc. is going on at an earlier stage. In addition the DG EAC officials and experts shaped the discourse in a way that did not irritate the member states or that even co-opted them. The discourse of the draft communications was thus typically coordinative, aiming at the policy development in a form of recommendations. Thus, normally the intensity of the policy action diminishes as the institutional procedure unfolds.

Council of the EU

When there is some coordinative activity in the Council of the EU, it happens in the working bodies, composed by the permanent representation staff or national ministry officials. There the council conclusions on the EU Commission proposal are prepared. These draft conclusions are debated and adopted in the session of Council. Usually they adopt the conclusions prepared by the presidency, supported by the council secretariat; sometimes there is also a resolution or similar (Interview 21, 25). Prior to the adoption, there is often some fine-tuning going on (in the presence of DG EAC and Council secretariat):

> *They keep cleaning the text, when they do not agree, they put it in square brackets and talk about it the next week and next week and next week. If they really can't solve it goes to ambassadors and if they cannot solve it they propose it to the ministers* (Interview 21).

Despite the claim of the interviewees currently employed in the DG EAC that power lies with the member states, there is little concrete traces that this power is actually used. The former DG EAC officials confirm this thesis by claiming that the EU Commission's communications on higher education were mostly the result of the internal coordination and less of the influence of the member states.

The interviewees reported also an important role of the presidency, when a government is determined in a specific policy field:

And this goes over several presidencies, the negotiation of this, of the program. […] And of course, this is always in close cooperation with the Commission; sometimes very smoothly without any conflicts, depending on the presidency. There are countries which are very strong in their positions and also sometimes in contrast to what the commission wants (interview 19).

There have also been also sporadic initiatives in the field of higher education by member states during their presidency period. For example Spaniards insisted that the social dimension of higher education should play a bigger role in EU policy scripts and managed to fit this into the Council conclusions (Interview 19). During its semester in 2009 Sweden took the initiative by pushing through a Council conclusions paper on developing the role of higher education in a fully-functional Knowledge Triangle (Council of the EU 2009). The Swedish commitment to get the document agreed as the Council's conclusion on the role of education in the competitiveness of the European economy was considerable. The civil servant working for the Swedish representation to the EU remembered:

And this is done sometimes – sometimes presidencies only use like commission documents and then they basically just go to the council secretariat and ask the council secretariat to take – to draft the council conclusions based on that document, and maybe they guide the council secretariat and say like, "We would like these, these, these parts in." But we decided to draft our own non-paper and background paper on the knowledge triangle because we believe there wasn't a good enough paper available already on it. […] The most interesting part of it, it was looking at the contribution of the education side of the triangle, how can education better be used in the knowledge triangle, what's the role of education. And what we – we didn't see any paper that thoroughly examined that, so we wanted to kind of have a list of elements and ideas what the role of education could be (Interview 22).

The documents of the Council of the EU generally display the same discursive characteristics as the EU Commission's communications that precedes them. The political rationale of engaging productive knowledge in economic growth and competitiveness is providing thrust to the policy programme of Knowledge economy and society including the reiteration of identical set of measures and policies. This time the reference to the crisis adds the sense urgency of the proposed reform course and goals (Council of the EU 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011).

European Council (heads of states and governments)

However the European summits of the heads of states and governments (the European council) do provide the national level with a significant power. Its programmatic documents do set the course of EU activities For instance the Lisbon agenda of 2000 was a European Council initiative and it was followed by other documents which paved the way for the EU Commission to go ahead with the proposals in the field of higher education. What ends up in these documents and how it is formulated is thus of importance.

But also over time, it became clear that we could get once or twice a year, a paragraph in the European council conclusions. And the European council conclusions have a political weight, a hundred times stronger than the resolution of the Ministry of Education (interview 20)

There was also the inverted flow of influence - the 2000s EU Commission's higher education team tried to obtain formulation in the European council programmatic texts:

There's no reason for them to say no. So when you – the attempt with the presidency became, Okay, let us have a resolution from the ministers, but let us also have a paragraph in the European Council conclusions, which just brings out the three things we want, and then we work on that for the future. And that's how it ended up functioning (Interview 20).

Member states

When it comes to the member states, their EU policy activity in the field of higher education is relatively low. For instance it became visible when there were concrete benchmarks on the agenda. Even though usually limited, the defence of the principle of subsidiarity (especially by Germany and the UK), has aroused considerable animosity especially around the number of benchmarks proposed, and on the issues of benchmarks for financing, and the targeted share graduates (Interview 19, 25). In such cases the dormant political power of the nation states in decision making is put in action:

Well, first of all, I mean, the conclusions on Education and Training 2020 are what's defining our educational cooperation, so the Commission also has to stick to that. So what we all agreed upon in the end after the negotiations is also the guideline for the Commission. For the commission, it will be difficult to explain that they are doing

something outside and using their money outside what we all have agreed upon. And it's Council conclusions, and that's always the interesting thing for Council conclusions – unique unanimity (Interview 25).

Another interviewee saw it more from the subsidiarity perspective and identified the integration (supranational) trend in the exercise of Europe 2020 and Education and Training 2020 documents. He attributed to the benchmarking a considerable leap in the sense of power and regulation shifting to the EU level when it comes to education and training:

First of all, it's in the Europe Education and Training 2020 in the cooperation framework in education. There were five benchmarks to be reached and higher education was one of them. And then of course, it was – yeah, very tricky but – yeah, long debate about – first of all on European level but also on national level. I mean, what number makes sense, like what target number. [...] It's the EU 2020 strategy where education has two goals, where you have country specific recommendations in the field of education and where you have a governance regime where the member states are told what to do by Commission. That's a pretty strong regime compared to what we had before. That's Lisbon and the treaty. That's really a qualitative revolution, I must say, because now you have commission country teams that go to the country and tell them, "In order to achieve a goal of only 10 percent dropouts in school, you need to do this and that and reduce the budget to this and that." That's something when you talk about subsidiarity. [...] I mean, that's really – I think it's a revolution [...] (interview 19).

This shows another materialisation of the neo-constitutionalism. The benchmarking is in essence a soft regulatory mechanism. However in practice it adds to the policy measures, tools and mechanisms leading towards a supranational regulation of higher education propelling the trend of shifting the regulatory powers to the supranational level (see Chapter 8.1 and 9).

European Parliament

The European Parliament is situated even further out on the margins of the EU coordinative sphere than the Council when it comes to the higher education policy:

And the process you've been through inside the commission is going to be sufficient in most cases to make sure that there's nothing there that's going to upset either the council or parliament. Parliament is not generally important on these documents, nor are the other institutions (Interview 20).

While examining the Parliament texts my attention was drawn to the *Report on the contribution of the European institutions to the consolidation and progress of the Bologna process* (European Parliament 2012). The striking element that surfaced in the analysis of this text was the strong *intertextuality*. On one hand the text reiterates all the main discursive topics, *topoi*, arguments of the EU Commission (DG EAC). The process of normalising cognitive ideas on the role of universities in reaching the competitiveness of Europe is brought about by the same communicative discourse as the one used by other two examined institutions.

On the other hand there is strong presence of discursive regularities that indicate the attempt to balance the economic purpose of higher education with a more normative consideration based in the welfare and liberal-humanist European tradition. Namely, besides the necessity to engage higher education in economic growth (which is still overwhelmingly represented in this text) the Report blends in a strong egalitarian discourse based in the social role of the university. In the attempt to refer to a normative-ideational origin it invokes the European heritage:

> [...] *whereas the university is a major aspect of European heritage, now almost a thousand years old, whose significance as a force for progress in society cannot be reduced to its contribution to the economy and whose development cannot be made solely contingent on economic needs* (European Parliament 2012)

Vulnerable groups, the social dimension, democratic participation, citizens, critical thinking are the flag words and concepts that appear as central. The general idea of European integration is strongly present, resonating the role of education in the EU project. This is not so unusual when considering who was the main author and the political sponsor of the document. Namely, the rapporteur in charge of this text was Luigi Berlinguer, one of the founding fathers of the Bologna Process[62]. The guiding ideas and principles of the Sorbonne declaration can be sensed in this report, especially in the elements such as the European identity, the heritage, culture and the integration beyond economic dimension (Sorbonne declaration 1998).

Thus, as interpreted through the Bologna and Council of Europe coordinative discourse, the EU Paliament's Report included a counterbalancing discursive dynamics. However, the integration of the two streams of ideas and the pertaining discourses appears somehow superficial and not well polished as in the other two cases. In fact the social considerations figure in the text as an

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[62] Luigi Berlinguer was at the time of drafting the examined Report a member of the European parliament and in 1998 the minister responsible for higher education in Italy. He was one of the four ministers to launch the pre-Bologna declaration at Sorbonne in 1998.

appendix, here and there correcting the strong, coherent ideational stream that runs throughout the dominant discourse and embedded in the hegemonic economic imaginary. The interviewee who was present in the drafting process of the document admitted that there was a lot of negotiation and persuasion going on behind the scenes in order to reach enough support to produce a document of this kind on behalf of the Parliament. In this process the DG EAC political staff and civil servants were involved.

> *If we were not in touch with the Commission people, the Parliament wouldn't carry anything on Bologna and higher education* (Interview 26).

Moreover, the DG EAC chief responsible for higher education and one subordinated civil servant were crucial in the drafting process. From the interview it appears that the interactive process of discourse saw two coordinative discourses coming from two different institutional backgrounds engaged in the persuasive action. The interviewee described this communication as asymmetrical, as the *idea of the founding fathers of Bologna* met with *the reality* represented by the DG EAC civil servants (Interview 26). In his narrative the normative ideas originating in the post-World War II European value system were utopian when set against the cognitive ideas on higher education as a key contributor to the economic performance of the integrating Europe.

8.3 EU and university rankings: Regional responses to the global regimes and transnational positioning of universities

In the Chapter 7 I revealed a considerable degree of animosity in the policy and political arena with regard to the transnational trade in higher education, the pertaining ideas and their institutional context. The phenomenon of trade in higher education rises issues which go beyond the bounds of higher education as a policy field. It belongs to a larger magnitude of shifts on the global scale. It also reaches beyond the spatial dimension of Europe and the nation states and calls for a transnational approach to understanding the modern ideations of higher education. In the following part of the Chapter 8 I briefly present the phenomenon of league tables and rankings of universities as the global phenomenon that required a regional response. The findings presented in the following paragraphs feed into the theorizing on the global shift

in social forces and the transnational structuration of higher education, presented in the Chapter 11.

8.3.1 The rise and role of league tables and rankings of universities

Ranking has been one of the most debated issues from the second half of the last decade. However, these mainly numerical objectifications of universities' performance are clearly not a recent invention. Ranking has been considered an important element of higher education systems for some time (e.g. in the US). But the relatively recent popularisation of ranking reached unprecedented proportions and extends their impact beyond the national regulatory systems and in some cases affect the national policies (Marginson 2012; Hazelkorn and Ryan 2013).

For the purpose of this dissertation the rankings and league tables were analysed in terms of their place in the larger material, institutional and ideational dynamics and impact on the regional structuration of higher education. I regarded this phenomenon as both a steering mechanism shaping the institutional frame and as an outcome of the major developments in the era of transnationalisation of higher education and pertaining shift in social forces. In the following section I outline the phenomenon and interpreted the relations to the studied European political and policy arena. The conceptualisations and theorising related to ranking are presented in Chapter 11.3.1.

8.3.2 Regional responses to the extra-regional (global) dynamics

Global reconfiguration of economic relations (and other social forces) encourages regional cooperation, but also triggers the regional response/reactions to the dominant trends which threaten to push a region to the peripheral position of the nascent hegemonic order (Marginson 2012, 14). The intensifying relevance of the higher education policy arena on the regional scale can be easily attributed to the effect of the extra-regional dynamics and hence regional positioning in the competitive global setting (Robertson 2010c).

The rise of popularity of rankings coincided with the increasing involvement of the DG EAC in the European and global higher education policy arenas. At some point the EU Commission decided to venture to the world of rankings by sponsoring its own ranking project. It is reasonable to postulate that thereby the EU Commission responded to the challenge of the global ranking race and showed its intention to reaffirm the EU as an important policy and political player on the regional and especially the global higher education scene. The political action and the logic of communication in various stages of the project offered the basis for exploring and interpreting this ideas and institutional context.

U-Multirank – the project

The EU ranking project is exceptional for the fact that it directly involves several research partners and stakeholders, among them two renowned European research centres: the Centre for Higher Education (CHE) from Germany and the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) from the Netherlands[63]. Both institutions are influential players, often acting as think tanks in their national environments and beyond. Their involvement contributes to the importance and strategic nature of the U-Multirank project. According to informants and the field enquiry, the individuals from these institutions have had a considerable role in shaping the ideas and designing the project proposal.

The involvement of entrepreneurial individuals and think tanks indicates the nature of the coordinative sphere. It included the epistemic communities, expert networks and advocacy coalitions that promoted a certain course of policy on the supranational/regional level. This reflects the general technology of policy coordination in the EU as presented by Schmidt and Thatcher (2013, 24). In this particular case the entrepreneurial individuals and their institutions commitment to materialise a policy idea matched with the aspiration and programmatic course of the EU Commission (DG EAC) involvement in higher education. The DG EAC officials interviewed were positive when talking about the U-Multirank and the aims it was supposed to achieve. Thus the policy sphere generating the coordinative and communicative discourses consisted of a blend of civil servants and policy researchers. The involved researchers and both protagonist research centres (CHE and CHEPS) were already familiar with producing commissioned research and providing research support for reforms in higher education.

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[63] http://www.u-multirank.eu/our-consortium/ (18.2.2014)

But let's first dwell a bit on the description of the EU financed ranking project: The project is being run by a consortium of nine international partners, led by CHE and CHEPS. It is consists of two sub projects: the U-Map and the U-Multirank. The latter is

> […] *a new multidimensional, user-driven approach to international ranking of higher education institutions. The dimensions it includes are teaching and learning, research, knowledge transfer, international orientation and regional engagement*[64].

U-Map, the predecessor of U-Multirank, aims at European classification of higher education institutions presenting the European higher education institutions through a multitude of categories with respect to the institutional mission and profile in order to allow meaningful comparisons[65]. Both projects are part of the same initiative based on opposition to the one-dimensional and reductionist rank-order methods.

U-Multirank is a focused institutional ranking initiative that allows for comparisons of institutions along a single dimension of institutional activity, such as education, research, regional involvement, etc. (Rauhvargers 2011, 74). Accordingly the institutions and programs are supposed to be compared only when their profiles, missions, purposes match enough to make the comparison meaningful. Thus, in its foundations the U-Multirank represents an alternative approach to the well-known rankings. The latter are known for their dependence on a narrow assortment of criteria and thereby limiting the relevant range of purposes, outputs and values of higher education, usually favouring the research intensive universities from the English speaking world (Marginson 2006).

Grounded on the strategic reflection about the global influence of existing rankings, the communication of the EU Commission is very nuanced and well placed in a series of arguments:

> *It is essential to develop a wider range of analysis and information, covering all aspects of performance – to help students make informed study choices, to enable institutions to identify and develop their strengths, and to support policy-makers in their strategic choices on the reform of higher education systems* (EU Commission, 2011a).

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[64] http://www.u-multirank.eu/methodology/ (18.2.2014)
[65] http://www.u-map.eu/ (18.2.2014)

The interviewees (who have been involved in the DG EAC work from the late 2000s up till now) master a well-developed persuasive discursive strategy based on rational arguments supporting the cognitive idea of this policy instrument (Interview 21; Interview 17; and Interview 18). They have used consistent argumentative devices and brought about the reasoning whereby the U-Multirank appears as a well thought-of solution to a discursively created reality where there is an obvious necessity for transparency and information which only can be achieved by regional action. The members of the permanent representations (none of them from the UK) interviewed timidly sympathised or at least did not show signs of scepticism in relation to the U-Multirank initiative (Interview 22; Interview 19; Interview 25). The relative passivity and low degree of attributed importance to the project by the member states officials (civil servants) interviewed is yet another hint at the level of initiative on the part of the EU Commission regarding the regional higher education strategy.

U-Multirank – supporting the EU universities positioning on the global higher education scene

From its outset the project can be viewed as a counter-initiative to the mushrooming rankings and league tables. The analysis of the discourse used when presenting the project revealed a certain urge to take part and thereby undertake its own initiative, rather than responding or following the standards and conditions imposed by most popular global ranking lists. On its web site, the U-Multirank is presented as contrasting the "existing global rankings". The texts defining the U-Multirank essence and the underlying methodology: consistently emphasise the differentiation with other initiatives

U-Multirank takes a different approach to the existing global rankings of universities. Firstly, it is multi-dimensional and compares university performances in the different activities that they are engaged in. It is not confined to research but takes into account different aspects and dimensions of the performance of universities. […] U-Multirank does not produce a combined, weighted score across these different areas of performance and then use these scores to produce a numbered league table of the world's "top" 100 universities. The underlying principle is that there is no theoretical or empirical justification for such composite scores. Empirical studies have shown that the weighting schemes of existing global rankings are not robust: small changes in the weights assigned

to the underlying measures (the indicator scores) will considerably change the composite scores and hence the league table positions of individual universities[66].

In their communicative discourse the project authors openly challenge the existing global rankings by questioning their methodology. Thereby they are attempting to thwart their credibility and propose the different approach instead. In other words, from the discourse it is possible to interpret adversary position of the EU backed ranking in regard to other rankings. The latter mostly favour UK and non-European universities (at least the most prominent ones). U-Multirank offers a broad array of parameters and criteria that make possible for the continental universities perform well enough to come out of the grey where they are usually drowned in the most popular global rankings (notably Times Higher Education Supplement rankings (THE) and Shanghai Jiao Tong rankings).

Thus, the U-Multirank can be interpreted as a regional response to the emerging global space of higher education. This interpretation can be underpinned by the communicative action that occurred as a direct consequence of the public presentation of the testing phase of the project. Namely the launch of the U-Multirank testing phase revealed tension and animosity between actors of the global higher education scene. One group that actively campaigned against U-Multirank were the actors who operate on the transnational higher education scene. For example, an outstanding critique came from Times Higher Education (THE) - the journal that harbours its own and well established ranking initiative. In one of a series of critical articles the editor of the THE World University Rankings concluded in a somehow condescending tone:

If this exciting and in many ways admirable experiment is going to realise its ambition to be a serious alternative to the existing global rankings, and not just an inward looking, EU-funded European initiative, its project team is going to have to work much harder to convince universities, especially those in the world largest higher education systems in the US, China and India, that it is an experiment worth joining.[67]

The same negative reaction also came from a prestigious universities; group – the League of European Research Universities (LERU).[68] Even though this organisation initially (on the

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[66] http://www.u-multirank.eu/#!/methodology?trackType=home&sightMode=undefined&section=undefined (1.2.2015).

[67] http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/news/u-multirank-ambitious-but-lacking-critical-mass-to-face-up-to-world-university-rankings (3.2.2015).

[68] http://www.ei-ie.org/en/websections/content_detail/3266 (18.2.2014).

occasion of the first steps in 2010) put hope in the U-Multirank project, it later changed its mind:

U-Multirank, which is currently under development, aims to evaluate not what universities do, but how well they do it. It could provide a healthy antidote against monotonic rankings because it ranks universities' performance separately in multiple dimensions (education, research, knowledge transfer, internationalisation and regional engagement), which are not meant to be reduced to one number. While there are potential benefits to this approach, difficulties abound. The proxies used rarely measure the reality of excellence, statistics are not comparable within Europe, let alone across the world beyond, and the potential for game playing by institutions is great. The dangers are that this approach encourages universities to focus on the proxies rather than on the underlying reality and that it leads to an obsessive measuring and monitoring culture which will stifle creativity. Thirdly, and most importantly, it further promotes the idea of the university as a supermarket selling off-the-shelf products that happen to be in vogue.[69]

LERU continued to heavily criticise the project when the first results were lunched. The main argument was that the methodology and the collected data were not credible enough to represent a solid ground for such initiative.[70] The institutional background to such discursive activity can be attributed to the perceived interest of research universities which score high positions in other rankings and thus might view the U-Multirank as a threat to their positioning in the global scene of higher education (notably the global market of education services).[71]

But the reaction of the universities was not the sole indicator of the changing global social forces resulting in the global framework mechanisms and rising competitive ideations of higher education. In the case of U-Multirank once again (see Chapter 7) the UK emerged as the country that backs its universities' business on the global market and consequently encourages the rankings that portray them as frontrunners in the global competition.

The UK was openly sceptical about the U-Multirank project already from the very outset, when it was discussed in the EU coordinative sphere between the EU Commission and the Council

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[69] http://www.leru.org/index.php/public/news/press_release_rankings/ (1.2.2015).

[70] http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130522073932668&query=u-multirank (2.2.2015).

[71] In the chapter 11.1. the rise of understanding of higher education as lucrative service on a global market is presented and discussed in more detail.

of the EU. One of the interviewees (a DG EAC official) presented the UK reservation about the European multi-dimensional ranking idea with the following words:

As part of that agenda […] *we want to bring forward a ranking, a multi-dimensional user-driven ranking tool. Now, that was one area where – which has promoted quite a lot of controversy where some countries have or have had reservations about a ranking tool, whether or not we should introduce a new ranking tool. For example, the UK has been quite reserved about whether it's the Commission's business to do this and whether or not Europe needs a more user-driven ranking tool* (Interview 17).

The opposition in the UK regarding the U-Multirank did not stop in the EU institutions. During the presentation of the results, the EU-sponsored ranking upset a number of the UK actors dealing with the international issues in higher education, notably the UK Higher Education international Unit.[72] The UK Higher Education International Unit (IU) which represents the whole higher education sector including government, initiates and carries out projects and activities to support UK higher education sector's international activities including the sector's engagement in European Union and Bologna Process policy debates.[73]

Opposition to U Multirank in UK had a high political profile. The minister of higher education attacked the EU sponsored ranking by characterising U-Multirank as:

[…] *an attempt by the EU Commission to fix a set of rankings in which [European universities] do better than [they] appear to do in the conventional rankings* (House of Lords 2012, 27).

In the report of the House of Lords EU Committee entitled *The Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe,* the conclusion on rankings clearly favours the THE rankings and politely discourages the EU Commission to venture further in the U-Multirank project:

If the perceived deficiencies in most other ranking systems are overcome in relation to this proposal then we could be convinced of the benefits of its introduction. However, until these deficiencies can be overcome, we consider that the Commission should prioritise other activities. In the meantime, rankings such as the Times Higher Education

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[72] http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130628110548376&query=u-multirank (2.2.2015).
[73] http://www.international.ac.uk/about-us.aspx (1.2.2015).

World University Rankings may have a valuable contribution to make. (House of Lords 2012, 27)

From the discourse and the intensity of the communicative action it can be interpreted that the listed UK public authorities, institutions and organisations operating on the global/transnational scene of higher education (such as ranking initiatives, associations of prestigious research universities, national agencies in charge of promotion of higher education in the UK etc.) campaigned against the EU backed ranking model and aimed at undermining the credibility. Thereby they were opposed to giving authority to different approaches to ranking in order to defend their high global positioning in the established rankings. The EU Commission official dealing with the UK remarks clearly indicated this phenomenon in her account:

Perhaps some of those institutions in the UK wouldn't rank as highly as they do now based upon citations, perhaps they would. But there has been some degree of disagreements, skepticism, further exploration needed to be done and convincing neither to be done of the usefulness of such tool for some. For others, for example, France was fully persuaded of the benefit of such an instrument (Interview 17).

To conclude, the institutional logic, communicative action, and the underlying ideas which emerged after the presentation and evolution of the U-Multirank, contribute to better understanding of the relevance of ranking as a particular transnational mechanism that contributes to shaping the higher education landscape and the salience of the transnational dimension of higher education in general.

A pan European ranking as transparency tool of the Bologna Process

The DG EAC officials tried to extend the relevance of the ranking project to the Bologna Process. In the Bucharest ministerial summit (2012) the new (developing) transparency tools were mentioned as the complement to the existing ones:

*We will strive to make higher education systems easier to understand for the public, and especially for students and employers. We will support the improvement of current and **developing transparency tools** in order to make them more user-driven and to ground them on empirical evidence. We aim to reach an agreement on common guidelines for transparency by 2015.* (Bucharest Communiqué 2012).

This coordinative discursive formulation hides the promotion of the idea of U-Multirank as transparency tool and was a result of coordinative action in the Bologna policy sphere, with the EU Commission as protagonist. A former DG EAC official remembered his conversation with the then incumbent official responsible for representing the EU Commission in the Bologna Process:

I suggested the Commission's representative to open the room for U-Multirank in the Communiqué by adding it as a transparency tool - as a new transparency tool (Interview 21).

In this light the U-Multirank becomes a potentially very influential and innovative supranational governance tool in a range of the more recently developed soft regulation mechanisms.

8.4 Summary and relevance of the EU in the ideation of higher education in contemporary Europe

Chapter 8 was dedicated to the discourse and ideas within the EU. It was examined as a coordinative venue where the discourse is negotiated, constructed and articulated. In this process the EU Commission plays a particularly active role and shows the characteristics of the agent that uses its abilities to bring forward, promote and normalise the cognitive ideas. Namely, the DG EAC officials were well aware of the limits of the institutional setting in which they were operating. They acted conscious of the norms, values, beliefs, political climate and other institutional properties of the member states. Hence they disposed of notable background ideational abilities. They also used their (sometimes impressive) foreground discursive abilities to form a discourse that would strengthen and normalise the proposed cognitive ideas on higher education as the engine of economic performance of the Europe of knowledge.

The Council of the EU and the European Parliament did not play a significant role in shaping or altering the discourse. On the other hand the presidency countries initiative always carries along a strong symbolic power, since what the heads of states and governments decide at the Council meetings represents a strong guideline for the work of the EU Commission.

The EU discourse became clearer from Communication to Communication. The initially scattered partial ideas gradually converged into a relatively detailed model of the desired higher education

system and institutions: the reforms should lead to more efficiency through integrating (centralising) the organisational units of the university and granting a greater degree of autonomy to professionalising management. This would in turn facilitate the competition and diversification of universities in order to address the diversified needs of society and the economy. One of the essential goals is to enable the emergence of excellent (world-class) universities – leaders in research and innovation.

One of the outstanding findings of this study is the individuals and group that formed behind the construction of EU text. The texts and political activity was propelled by strongly motivated individuals - and groups of civil servants and experts that can be called epistemic community. The literature refers to these motivated individuals as policy entrepreneurs, i.e. politically skilled individuals to respond in specific contextual and institutional circumstances to the opportunity to advance policy ideas (Kingdon, 1995)[74]. These individuals seize and opportunity and exploit a variety of mechanisms depending on the policy process involved (Corbett 2005, 183).

However, it would be reductionist to claim that the DG EAC is originator of ideas. The hegemonic imaginary of globalised knowledge economy transcends the sites of governance and blurs the origin of ideas. Like OECD also the EU institutions become sites of reworking the ideas generated in the in-identifiable site and pertaining to the larger historical structures – to overall philosophical-ideational hegemony or a sort of *zeitgeist*. The policy proposals are presented as necessary in order to solve the perceived problems of higher education in Europe and to feed into the programmatic ideas on making Europe a competitive region.

The case of U-Multirank project reveals EU strategic action in support of its universities on the global stage. As well as in other initiatives, also in the case of U-Multirank it is possible to interpret the strategy of developing a coherent regional higher education for a globally competitive Europe. One of clear aims is to involve the regional higher education into the ongoing global re-structuration of higher education – an effort that is less likely to succeed if performed by single member states.

Similarly to what was presented in Chapter 7, also in the case of U-Multirank the UK stepped forward to attack the credibility of the new ranking initiative. It is not a surprise considering the traditionally high scoring of the UK major export oriented universities in the established

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[74] Referred to in Corbett 2005 ,151-167.

ranking charts. By defending the monopoly of the rankings that favour the UK universities, the UK appeared once again as the promoter of its higher education as industry on the global market. The idea of higher education as a lucrative export industry and universities as global market performers seems to be well incorporated in the British institutional background.

9. The emerging hegemony of ideas and the EU's advancing regulatory power over higher education in the member states

The EU is becoming an increasingly effective and comprehensive European scale economic governance and to a lesser extent social governance. In this process higher education is affected mostly in an indirect way - in a complex process of shifting up the governance through the multilevel, multiscale organisation of governance instead of taking over the whole policy sector (Fairclough and Wodak 2008, 113). In the previous chapter I interpreted the EU as one of the principal coordinative arenas in the creation of discourses and ideas on higher education in Europe. It represents a discursive venue on its own and besides national actors involves transnational civil and political societies, nesting ideas and forming a supranational institutional framework. The EU Commission emerged as a single actor with a considerable capacity to use the discourse to advance certain ideas. In this chapter I examined the EU Commission and the EU level ideations of higher education from a different angle.

9.1 EU - Advancing ideational hegemony and the emerging transnational multilevel state society complex

A number of scholars focused their research on the process and results of soft mechanisms of regulations such as guidelines, benchmarking, setting of objectives, coordination, financial mechanisms and policy scripts (e.g. Gornitzka 2009; Ravinet 2008; Battory and Lindstrom 2011; Robertson 2010c; Hartmann 2008). In her outstanding piece on emerging normative power of the EU, Eva Hartman (2008) concluded that European integration indeed paves the way to new institutional arrangements which take up the state functions that are important if

hegemony is to be established. She engaged Gill's (2003) conceptualisation of *new constitutionalism*, which was also adopted in this study, especially in Chapter 8, when dealing with the EU mechanisms to steer the policy course in the member states and in Chapter 4, regarding the policy instruments of the Bologna Process, such as quality assurance structures and instruments (e.g. European Quality Assurance Register), the UNESCO/Council of Europe Recognition of qualifications regime and the UNESCO/OECD guidelines on the quality assurance of transnational higher education). These are so-called soft law mechanisms that do not represent a legal obligation for the national governments. Soft law is also a more acceptable method of codifying new (cognitive) ideas in the sense that they would less likely meet the same resistance as the binding regulation would, especially in the sensitive area of education (Hartmann 2008, 73).

In this chapter, the curiosity about how far the new constitutional trend affects higher education in Europe encouraged me to enquire beyond the soft law. I was inspired by the interrogative on how far the emerging transnational (European) institutional (normative) order and the regulatory framework reaches into the sector of higher education, also in terms of hard law. While looking for the answers I moved the spotlight away from the most obvious processes of Europeanisation of higher education (such as the Bologna Process, EU Commission initiatives in higher education, etc.). More precisely, I was curious about the implication of market regulations affecting the cross-border higher education provision. Namely, what was on the global scale attributed to the WTO GATS negotiations in terms of the commodification of higher education can also be discerned on the regional scale - in the internal market policy of the EU.

EU – a complex and multilevel integration process

The EU integration is more than just a game of nation states, international organisations and transnational actors. It is about a transnational society and a transnational re-configuration of social forces (Apeldoorn 2002). The EU integration is characterised by supranational/transnational economic relations, ideational dynamics and institutional shifts. It is possible to talk about an emergent transnational, multi-level state-society complex and the contours of a transnational historical bloc (see Chapter 11.3).

The ideas have developed throughout the history of the EU integration in an uneven continuum (see Chapter 8.1.1.). In the 1980s these dynamics resulted in a market-monetarist consensus and engaged the grand idea of unification of the market to re-launch the European integration. The cognitive idea of the market as the integrative engine gradually gained momentum. The normalisation of the idea was accompanied by the advancing regulatory model supporting the competition in the name of creating a *single European market* (Thatcher 2013, 176). The upgrade came with the single currency and the general trend towards the gradual concentration of vast regulatory powers in the EU Commission and the European Court of Justice (Gill 2003a, 63; Thatcher 2013, 186).

Higher education in the emerging hegemonic order

For decades there have been decisive attempts and tendencies to take the sector of higher education to the international and supranational levels. This is reflected in a number of international and European level documents, processes leading to supranational regimes of soft regulation and thereby moving towards regional (and global) normative power (Hartmann 2008). The process of making higher education a European matter was accelerated with the consecration of the programmatic idea and the discourse of a knowledge economy whereby the economic value of higher education has been discursively prioritized and ideated as the key lever for raising the competitiveness of the European economy in the world (Serrano-Velarde 2011; Robertson 2008; Jessop 2008).

But as I presented elsewhere in this dissertation, the programmatic idea of a knowledge economy has not been the only ideational novelty that affected the ideas on higher education in Europe. At least it has not been possible to venture in discovering the range of ideational aspects of Europeanisation of higher education only through the imagined knowledge economy.

In several chapters I singled out the changing ideation of higher education from a social institution to a tradable commodity. This shift can be related to the increasing (transnational) trade in higher education services as a lucrative (export) business that needs access to the educational 'markets' outside the national borders. The process of opening national higher education to trade in services implies the clash of two domains with conflicting ideational platforms. Namely, competition, free trade and transnational service business start to contradict the cultural and social role of higher education, especially in preserving cultural and linguistic

diversity. The following sub-chapters are dedicated to the legal cases from the rulings of the European Court of Justice which addressed precisely the disputes originating in this tension.

9.2 The legal and normative framework: Directives and the European Court of Justice

Even though the Europe-wide and EU initiatives in higher education are voluntary policy processes in an area where the primary competence lies with the member states, this does not mean that legally binding provisions at the EU level do not exist. The complexity of the European organisational structure contains mechanisms that transform seemingly voluntary commitments into binding rules. For example, a strong voluntary symbolic commitment to mobility in the Bologna Process and in the EU Lisbon strategy resulted in a series of European Court of Justice (ECJ) rulings addressing the asymmetries of mobility and the related entitlement to student support (Garben 2012). When such rulings accumulate, and combine with existing and new EU Directives, they represent a binding jurisprudence in the EU case-law based legal system. This indeed raises the question of what was the normative and ideational basis for the ECJ's decisions in such cases. In the process of answering it I first examined the legal logic; the Directives affecting higher education, and a brief insight into the history of ECJ.

9.2.1 Recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes

Over the past decades the recognition of qualifications has been the subject of law and policy by several European and national actors. With the initiative of the Council of Europe (signed by the European countries in 1997), and later of the Bologna Process, the recognition of qualifications became a central mechanism for increasing student mobility. In the context of the European integration, the recognition of qualifications represents a cornerstone of the materialisation of the free movement of persons in the EU. It is nesting in the general idea that in order to have a fully functioning European labour market, the working EU citizen needs to be able to reap the fruits of his education in any of the EU member states (Garben 2011, 128). Hence, belonging to the domain of free movement of persons on the integrated EU labour

market, the recognition of qualifications also belongs to the free market institutional arrangements.

Professional recognition is addressed by Article 53 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), where it is provided for easing employment by the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualification. Like many other areas of EU law, the recognition of qualifications is also subject to controversies. Confusion and uncertainty is prevalent when it comes to the issues regarding the distinction between the recognition for professional (employment) and academic (further studies) purposes. Seemingly the academic recognition does not fall under the realm of the EU's responsibility, but in practice (see the selected ECJ cases below) it can play an important role in the context and the application of three of the fundamental principles: freedom of movement of workers, freedom of establishment and freedom to provide services (Garben 2011, 147).

The process of recognition can also contain the verification of an academic title. This verification is general regardless of the purpose it may serve. Once an 'end degree' is recognised this is recognition for recognition sake and not defined in terms of the purpose of recognition (ibid. 139). In addition, it is often not clear if recognition is sought for employment or for the continuation of study. Academic degrees can at the same time constitute professional degrees, e.g. when they give access to a regulated profession and when in general they give access to an academic career and hence to employment. In the latter case it is a *de facto* professional recognition even though it concerns the recognition of an academic qualification (ibid.140). Thus the academic and professional recognition are closely intertwined and therefore it is difficult to draw a clear line between them or separate them into two distinct categories. This will be visible also in the selected ECJ cases below.

An academic recognition is also implied in Article 165 of the TFEU which sets out the competences of the EU in higher education in a more general manner. After laying down the paradigm of national educational autonomy it encourages the adoption of instruments and mechanisms to foster the mobility of students and teachers, among others also "the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of studies". Thus through a combined and complex reading of both Article 53 and 165 of the TFEU, it is possible to conclude that the EU *de facto* covers both the professional and to a greater extent also an academic recognition. In addition, if considered the norm and the codification of the free movement of people, the distinction between academic and professional recognition becomes irrelevant (ibid. 155).

A more detailed regulation of the recognition of qualifications was provided by the EU Directive on a general system on the recognition of professional qualifications (European Council 1989, hereinafter the Recognition Directive) and in a series of profession-specific acts. The Recognition Directive provides a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years duration. The principles of the recognition are based on the mutual trust that member states have in each other's professional qualifications. The system essentially establishes a presumption that the qualifications of an applicant entitled to pursue a regulated profession in one member state are sufficient for the pursuit of that profession in the other member states.

Later it has been amended several times and complemented by the regulation of specific regulated professions. As of 20 October 2007, all the acts related to the recognition of professional qualifications were repealed and replaced by the Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (European Parliament and the Council 2005)[75].

However, the EU regulation in the field of recognition of qualifications did not limit its effect only on the mobility of graduates and employment. Namely in practice it soon proved relevant for another aspect of higher education in Europe – the emerging industry of the transnational provision of higher education.

The provisions of the directive do not influence directly the regulation of transnational education in the EU but as visible from the cases, they come into the scheme indirectly, in the disputes and rulings of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). These rulings regard/affect the regulatory competences of the member states in terms of their recognition of diplomas of such types of higher education. How this happens is best illustrated by the selected ECJ cases.

9.2.2 The ECJ's historical political role in the complex organisational structure of the EU

Before an overview of the legal theory on the ECJ's judicial activism and political role, it is important to have in mind two tenets of legal setting in which the ECJ exerts its authority. Firstly, the ECJ operates within the principle of supremacy whereby the EU law comes before

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[75] The Directive 2005/36/EC is a new directive which represents an updated/upgraded version of the Directive 89/48. A third upgrading is expected in 2014.

the national legal order. The supremacy of the EU legislation over national laws is in line with the well-established and practiced legal principle of federal above local and also surfaces when there is a discrepancy between competence and jurisdiction. This is often reflected in the supremacy of some ideas, beliefs and norms over others when the ruling is in the position to give priority to one or the other - i.e. market freedoms over social, educational cultural and other politics of particular national concern (Dawson 2013, 14). And secondly, the EU's legal system is based on the case-law principle, thus the jurisprudence becomes law. The murky boundaries of the ECJ's competences and the voids in the legal provisions (e.g. Directives) make the judges build the accumulation of cases which in itself represents the jurisprudence and thus the EU law (de Waele 2010, 18).

Historically, the ECJ played an important integrative role. In the periods of the relative impotence of other institutions, it pulled the EU integration process forward. In such cases, the guideline is usually the integrative principle, whereby the ruling shall be in favour of integration when in doubt (de Waele 2010, 12). The situation of the permanently troubled integration process in which the ECJ found itself, leaves the door ajar for the institutionalisation of the ideas that are deemed as integrative. Namely, the more the integration process is blocked and the political institutions fail to provide the necessary regulation, the more the ECJ has to rely on autonomous concepts instead of precise legislation. Thereby it pushes forward the jurisprudence, mainly advancing a market-based integration through individual litigation (Dawson 2013, 27). This historical role has been subject to many political dilemmas and legal disputes and has been extensively dealt with in legal theory, political science and other disciplines.

9.3 The ECJ rulings and institutionalisation of market supremacy

In recent decades the allegations of the ECJ's judicial activism has gained in salience – mainly because, with the expansion of the EU law and the spill over effects of the internal market to non-market policy domains. This led the Court to get involved in policy domains which the member states saw as their own preserve (Muir et.al. 2013, 2). Amongst such non-market fields it is also possible to find education.

Even though in the course of evolution, next to the well established domain of market-making, the TFEU also envisaged combating social exclusion, the critique points out an imbalance in favour of the economic dimension of integration and the priority (in an implicit hierarchy) of market values/principles over non-market values (Dawson 2013, 25). The construction of the discourse of the dichotomy between social and economic dimension and the pertaining trade-off between social justice and economic efficiency can be attributed to the communication of the ideas belonging to the neo-classical economic school (Kaupa 2013, 60). The dichotomous conceptualisation is in itself setting the frame of discourse and thereby institutionalising the normalised substantive content of ideas on economic and social issues.

But how far this arbitrary ideological positioning of the ECJ has reached, and what has been there already in the legal framework proposed by other EU institutions? Namely, the hierarchy of values also stems from the TFEU determining that the EU is, first and foremost, an 'internal market' in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is a priority. The market freedoms somehow represented a 'constitutional' rule which must prevail over national law and gradually this became a structure for imposing the justification to state actions (Azoulai 2013, 169).

But nevertheless, there is enough void for the court to decide otherwise, which means that there is a political element in the court's decisions. The political dimension of the ECJ's rulings has been subject to many debates of law scholars and the general public. The jurisprudence contains a number of prominent labour cases (among which the famous "Viking case") where it is possible to discern clear contours of a neoclassical ideational infusion behind the ECJ's final decision (Kaupa 2013, 67).

The national specific, the cultural and social arguments and other areas closely linked to the national institutional background are often overridden by the normalised and institutionalised ideas that serve as the fundaments to the European integration and its economic success on the global scale. One can say that the way the EU law is structured implies a trivialisation of the values and norms in a given national institutional context. Technically, the public interests such as the social and cultural dimensions are viewed as limitations of subjective rights and therefore subject to a proportionality test which has a devaluing effect as it consists of balancing different interests of presumably equal value (Azoulai 2013, 170).

Case C-153/02 – Neri vs. European School of Economics

The case 153/02 (ECJ 2003), concluded on November 13, 2003, applied to the recognition of academic degrees (higher education diplomas) from one EU Member obtained at a commercial (for profit) legal entity in the other (Italy). Valentina Neri, an Italian citizen, enrolled into an Italian branch of the European School of Economics (ESE), based in the UK. The ESE was a private for-profit establishment that at the time did not award its own degrees but for a remuneration organised courses for the students enrolled with the Nottingham Trent University (NTU) in accordance with the study plans validated by that university, which then awarded a final degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours (the NTU was the degree awarding institution). The quality of the courses of study provided by the ESE was also subject to an audit by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. The ESE was in essence a private company preparing students for the examination based on the NTU study programmes. It was allowed under UK law to award degrees on behalf of the NTU and operated cross-border (i.e. with branch units also outside the UK).

After Ms Neri enrolled the first year at the ESE, she enquired with the Italian authorities about the recognition of the diploma awarded after the completion of her studies. The Italian authorities informed her that the ESE was not authorised to organise university level courses in Italy and that the degree obtained after such courses could not be recognised as university level degrees in Italy even though recognised as such in the UK. Following that news, Neri demanded the reimbursement of the tuition fee, which was denied by the ESE.

The Italian court found that based on Italian Government administrative practices the

> *[...] degrees awarded by universities in the EU member states may be recognised in Italy only if students have attended courses in the states in which the degrees are issued. In contrast, degrees awarded to Italian nationals on the basis of periods of study at establishments operating in Italy with which these universities have entered into private-law contracts are not to be recognised."* (ECJ 2003, point 27).

In the administrative practices referred to by the Italian court, the Italian Government justified the restrictions with the need to ensure high standards of university education. It insisted that the Italian legal order did not accept agreements such as the case on the table because of the *public interest* principle in relation to the *cultural and historical values of the state*. According to the Italian Government, the agreement in question prevented direct quality control of these private bodies by the competent authorities both in the EU member state of origin and the host EU member state.

The judge of the Italian court asked the ECJ for clarifications on the compatibility of the Italian government administrative practices with the EU provisions on the free movement of workers, the right to establishment and the right to provide services. The ECJ responded that the failed recognition of the transnational provider's diplomas was not based on a fair assessment and thus represented an infringement to the TFEU principles of the right to establishment (ECJ C-153/02). Namely, the court concluded that the failed recognition of the degrees would deter students from enrolling into the ESE programmes and hence hinder the ESE's commercial activity in Italy.

In the document of its ruling, the ECJ recognized the right of the receiving country to prescribe the fulfilment of certain criteria before allowing the provision of higher education on its territory in order to safeguard an adequate level of academic standards. However, the ECJ statement also said that the requirements should not exceed what is needed to achieve the above-mentioned goal. In the assessment of the *proportionality* of the implemented measure the ECJ decided that this restriction (resulting in the non-recognition of diplomas awarded by a franchised institution) exceeded what was required for safeguarding a high level of quality in university education. The ECJ called for a fair assessment of the diploma in question before granting or refusing the recognition:

> *However, whilst the aim of ensuring high standards of university education appears legitimate to justify restrictions on fundamental freedoms, such restrictions must be suitable for securing the attainment of the objective which they pursue and must not go beyond what is necessary in order to attain it* (ECJ C-153/02, 46). […] *the administrative practice at issue does not appear to satisfy the requirement of proportionality in relation to the objective pursued.* (ECJ 2003, point 48).

The Neri case shows that in practice the dispute about the recognition of diplomas was viewed from the perspective of the transnational education business. The refusal to recognise the degrees of a foreign institution was deemed as an obstacle to the market principles and norms of the EU integration, despite the justification based on the national concerns about the quality of education.

Case C-286/06 - Commission vs. Spain

The Case C-286/06 was about the holders of an Italian degree obtained after completion of studies at an institution in Spain. The study in Spain was based on a framework cooperation

agreement between the University of Alicante (Spain) and the Polytechnic University of the Marches (Italy) for the study of civil engineering. The programmes carried out by the University of Alicante were coordinated and supervised by the Polytechnic University of the Marches. In practice it was about a franchise-like agreement, but not referred to as such in the ECJ documents.

The complainants were awarded a diploma of civil engineer (*laurea in ingegneria civile*) by the Polytechnic University of the Marches (Italy) on the basis of the equivalence of their studies at the University of Alicante with those in Italy. The holders of the diploma in question also completed the Italian State examination, following which they were granted the entitlement to pursue the profession of engineer in Italy.

The competent Spanish authorities refused to recognise the diplomas of the University of the Marches obtained at the University of Alicante invoking the argument that they cannot be publicly recognised as higher education diplomas (in Spain) because the programmes leading to them did not undergo the procedures envisaged by Spanish legislation for the validation of higher education programmes. They claimed that in the case here presented, that the provisions of Directive 89/48 were not applicable since all the relevant facts occurred in one single member state.

Following the failure of the recognition process and the refused authorisation to pursue the profession of road, canal and port engineer in Spain, the holders of these diplomas complained to the EU Commission. As opposed to the Spanish government who claimed the total sovereignty over the decision in the case presented, the EU Commission insisted that the case was about the recognition of foreign degrees for the use of employment and thus fell clearly under the regulatory provisions of the Directive 89/48. After it did not succeed to change the mind of the Spanish authorities by pressing them with the *Infringement procedure,* the EU Commission brought the case to the ECJ.

The ECJ ruled in favour of the EU Commission, holding that

> […] *by refusing to recognise the professional qualifications of an engineer obtained in Italy on the basis of the university education and training provided solely in Spain, and by making the admission to internal exams for promotion in the civil service subject, in the case of engineers with professional qualifications obtained in another member state,*

*to the academic recognition of those qualifications, the Kingdom of Spain has failed to
fulfil its obligations under Directive 89/48* (ECJ 2008a).

The ruling obliged Spain to recognise the diplomas awarded by an Italian institution after
the completion of studies carried out by a Spanish institution in Spain. In practice this meant
that Spain had to recognise the Italian procedures and acts that gave the public validity of
the higher education programmes recognised as such in Italy. In the presented case, the
recognition directive did not only mean the automatic recognition of diplomas and degrees
for employment, but also implies the indirect recognition of accreditation and quality
assurance. The latter is not officially an issue dealt with in any other EU regulation.

With the interference (albeit indirect) into the jurisdiction over the validation of higher
education programmes , the *acquis communitaire* interferes quite substantially with the
content of teaching and the organisation of education. These are, according to Articles 165
and 166 of the TFEU, categories under the jurisdiction of the member states. In this sense it
is possible to interpret the tendency towards taking up the competences on education to the
transnational level.

Case C-274/05 - Commission vs. Greece

In a similar case, the EU Commission entered into dispute with Greece almost simultaneously
as it entered in dispute with Spain (the above-presented case). In case C-274/05 (ECJ 2008b)
the EU Commission brought to court the Hellenic Republic because the Greek government
refused to recognise the diplomas obtained by its citizens at a private establishment that
provided higher education programmes "homologated" by a higher educational institution from
another EU member state. In other words the disputed diplomas were obtained at a franchised
institution.

The particular dispute was about the validity of a franchised programme, accredited in another
EU member state but carried out in Greece by a private institution. Greece refused to recognise
such qualification because according to Greek law only public universities can grant higher
education degrees. Also in this case the EU Commission insisted that the diplomas awarded in
Greece are diplomas of another EU member state system, and thus subject to the legislation in
that country. Similarly to the Khatzithanasis case (ECJ 2008c) the EU Commission also denied
the interference with the Greek education system since the disputed qualifications were

officially not part of the Greek system. The dispute was not solved, so the EU commission eventually handed the case over to the ECJ.

The ECJ judgement concluded in favour of the EU Commission. It ruled that Greece had failed to fulfil its obligations under the Council Directive 89/48/EEC on a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years' duration.

The ECJ judgment implied some solutions that importantly characterised the juridical practice in the disputes regarding the cross-border provision of higher education and the recognition of the pertaining qualifications. It suggested that in the case of franchise agreements it was not necessary for the provider of professional education and training to be a higher education institution:

> *It should also be noted that, according to the wording of Directive 89/48 itself, the education and training must not necessarily have been received in a university or in a higher education establishment. According to the second indent of Article 1(a) of that directive, it is sufficient that it is an 'establishment of equivalent level'.* (ECJ 2008b, point 34)

The ECJ concluded that the host country is obliged to recognize the diploma in accordance with the status of the education programme in the country of origin of the franchise regardless of the status of the institution on its territory. Additional verifications of the adequacy of the completed programme to the domestic standards meant (according to the ECJ) failing to fulfil the obligations of the Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications:

> *It is apparent from the above-mentioned considerations that Articles 1(a) and 3 of Directive 89/48 must be interpreted as meaning that a host member state is obliged, subject to the application of Article 4 of that directive, to recognise a diploma awarded by an authority of another member state even if that diploma is awarded on the completion of the education and training received, in whole or in part, in the host member state and even if, according to the legislation of that State, that education and training is not recognised as higher education.* (ECJ 2008b, point 35)

In practice this means that the member states do not have full jurisdiction over the content of teaching and organisation of education system on its territory. It also means that once an institution/programme is accredited or anyhow publicly recognised as higher education in

one member state, it can set up branches and conclude franchise agreements across the EU and having such diplomas recognised by the member states without them having a say on the quality of the so provided programmes. Similar logic followed in the case C-151/07.

Case C-151/07 - Khatzithanasis

In the Khatzithanasis case (ECJ 2008c) the original dispute occurred between an individual citizen (Mr Khatzithanasis) and the Greek ministry under whose jurisdiction the authority for Recognition of Professional Education and Training Qualifications operates. The latter refused to grant Mr Khatzithanasis the authorisation to pursue the profession of optician in Greece after he obtained a diploma for opticians awarded by the Vinci Regional Institute for Optical Studies and Optometry in Italy. Mr Khatzithanasis completed his studies in Greece at an establishment that had a franchise agreement with the above-mentioned Italian institution and was not recognised as an educational institution in Greece. The grounds of the rejection were, in essence, that the diploma, relied upon by the applicant, was awarded on completion of studies, the greater part of which were followed in an independent study centre that has its headquarters in Greece, and was not recognised as an educational establishment by the Greek legislation.

The conflict was eventually brought to the ECJ which concluded that in the case of franchise agreements (in professional education and training for regulated professions) the sending country is responsible for the verification of the fulfilment of standards in accordance with its own regulations. According to the ECJ, the transnational provision is not part of the teaching and the system of the host member state, but of that of its origin:

> *It is also clear from case-law that that interpretation of Directive 89/48[76] does not cast doubt on the responsibility of the Hellenic Republic for the content of teaching and the organisation of the education system, since the diploma in question is covered, in the context of Directive 89/48, not by the Greek education system but rather the education system of the member state to which the competent authority which awarded the diploma belongs. It is therefore, for that latter authority to ensure the quality of the training and education at issue (ECJ 2008c)*

This reasoning makes it possible to circumvent the principle of member state sovereignty over the content of teaching and the organisation of the education system stated in article 165 of the TFEU. In other words, the ruling of the ECJ denied the responsibility of the

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[76] An older version of the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications

member states over the decision on the appropriateness and the standards of education carried out on its territory if this education is linked (via a franchise agreement) to an institution from another member state.

It seems that the ECJ did not see the education standards from one member state applied to the education in another member state as a threat to the cultural and linguistic diversity as provided in article 165 of the Treaty on Functioning of the EU. The ECJ's discourse seems to privilege the rationality of *labour market integration* over other domains. The emphasis of the text is rather placed on principles such as the freedom of choice, the single market, the mobility of professionals, etc. which is visible in the following lines:

> *[…] the rights of nationals of a member state to choose the member state in which they wish to acquire their professional qualifications is inherent in the exercise, in a single market, of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the EC Treaty [TFEU] (ECJ 2008c, point 32)*

The final ruling of the ECJ was in favour of the recognition of the qualification obtained via a franchise agreement despite the prior denial of recognition from the national authorities:

> *[…] competent authorities of a host member state are required [...] to recognise a diploma awarded by a competent authority in another member state even though that diploma attests to the education and training received, in whole or in part, at an establishment located in the host member state which, according to the legislation of that State, is not recognised as an educational establishment (ECJ 2008c)*

The ECJ rulings knitting the binding (de)regulation of transnational higher education

In all cases, the ECJ's rulings in one way or another indicate the trend of weakening the sovereignty of member-state authority over higher education. In the above-presented cases the receding of the national domain of responsibilities occurred as a result of the expanding market freedoms in the transnational provision of higher education.

The chosen cases show that when a transnational provision is in question, the advance of the market norms occurs by relying on the country of origin principle, thereby overriding the right of member states to determine the content of teaching and organisation of the education on their territories and safeguarding their cultural and linguistic specifics. All these categories of norms are part of EU law but they figure in a hierarchical relationship. Thus,

as argued in theory, also from the collected data analysed here it is possible to conclude that when there is a dilemma between the market principles and the socio-cultural concerns, the former prevails over the latter.

In the following sections the case of the infringement procedure against Slovenia shows how the ECJ rulings are used actively in an attempt to change a member state's educational legislation in favour of the trade in education services.

9.4 The EU Services Directive, the advance of trade ideas and the (de)regulation of higher education

The activism of the ECJ and the involvement of the EU Commission in the above-presented cases had at least one concrete follow-up policy action in connection with another regulatory instrument of the EU - the Directive on services in the Internal Market (hereinafter the Services Directive). The Services Directive (European Parliament and the Council 2006) is here presented as another example of the penetration of market (de)regulation into the realm of higher education and the legal imposition of the normalised free trade/market ideas over socio-cultural institutions. In the case presented here the EU Commission actively engaged the above-presented ECJ cases in an attempt to affect the legislation of a member state with the view of aligning its higher education system with the regime of the trade in services on the internal market. The case contributes to the argument on the gradual developing of a regional set of rules and regulations towards the creation of a supranational level of a higher education normative and regulatory framework – thereby forming a sort of new constitutional order above the nation states.

Infringement case 2011/4027[77]

In the spring of 2011, following an exchange of correspondence with the Slovene Government, DG MARKT concluded that the Slovenian *Higher Education Act* was in contradiction with the

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[77] The case in this chapter is studied on the basis of two official letters sent by the EU Commission to the Government of Slovenia as part of the Infringement procedure. Both the *Formal Notice* and the *Reasoned Opinion* were obtained from the Government of Slovenia upon a letter of request. The EU Commission refused to give access to these letters in the working language of the EU claiming that the official versions were the Slovene ones. Thus, I analyzed the Slovene texts of the documents and translated myself the segments used in this dissertation.

Services Directive and with the TFEU. Consequently, the EU Commission triggered an *Infringement procedure* (case number 2011/4027). Through a 'formal notice' and a 'reasoned opinion' the EU Commission requested the Government of Slovenia to change the important provisions of the *Higher Education Act*. What follows is a summary of both requests, at present only available in Slovenian.[78]

In the *Formal notice* (the first step in accordance with the rules of infringement procedure) issued on 20th May 2011, the EU Commission stated that Slovenia did not fulfil its obligations from Articles 49 and 56 in relation to 54 of the TFEU and Articles 10, 13, and 16 of the Services Directive (EU Commission 2011b). According to the EU Commission, the *Higher Education Act* was in breach with the *acquis* because:

I. it demands from institutions (or "providers") of higher education established in another Member State to obtain the permission from the Slovenian authorities prior to the provision of higher education on the territory of Slovenia without transparently presenting the reasons for such a requirement (which would be grounded in the public interest, are proportional, clear, unambiguous, objective, published in advance, transparent and accessible);

II. it requires accreditation - in accordance with Slovenian standards - of the 'branch campuses' of higher education institutions from other member states and listing in a special register of higher education institutions in the national register of such institutions;

III. it allows for higher education programmes provided by foreign institutions to be carried out in Slovenia by another institution (registered in Slovenia, based on a 'franchise' agreement) only in the case when this institution is accredited by the Slovenian national agency responsible for accreditation and when it is listed in the national register of higher education institutions.

In response to the formal notice, the Slovene Government amended the relevant legislation to allow higher education institutions from other member states to offer their programmes in

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[78] In fact, the EU Commission repeatedly insisted with the authors that all the documentation related to the case 2011/4027 is only available in Slovenian – a stance that has made research more difficult.

Slovenia with fewer requirements. The EU Commission was thus not satisfied with the outcome and concluded that Slovenia continues to breach the provisions of the Services Directive and the TFEU in the matter concerned. Consequently it launched the second stage of the Infringement procedure – the *Reasoned opinion*, issued on 20th June 2013, DG MARKT (EU Commission 2013). The EU Commission demanded from the Slovene Government again to uphold the EU rules on the freedom of establishment and free provision of services (Articles 49 and 56 of the TFEU, as well as Articles 10, 13 and 16 of the Services Directive). This time the EU Commission based its objection on the grounds that the relevant Slovenian authorities did not adopt the needed secondary legislation that would ensure clarity and thus open market access for the transnational providers of higher education.

In fact, the amended *Higher Education Act* stated that a special administrative procedure needed to be set up by secondary legislation in order for the EU-based providers to be able to operate in Slovenia. This secondary legislation had not been adopted despite the legal obligation to do so and so the EU Commission concluded that higher education providers from other member states could not exercise their right to establish a branch or subsidiary, or provide education through a franchise agreement, because of the missing legal clarity.

However, the reasoned opinion is accompanied by seven pages of text in which the EU Commission motivated and explained its action. According to the EU Commission, the Slovenian authorities should only retain the right to verify whether an institution/provider is publicly recognised in the Member State of origin in order to allow the provision of higher education on its territory. Therefore the member states do not have the jurisdiction over franchised programmes even though these are carried out on their territory. It is precisely therewith that the EU Commission made use of the above-presented ECJ's jurisprudence[79].

While the EU Commission's demand to clarify the terms and conditions for the access of the transnational provision of higher education to Slovenia would not appear problematic, the accompanying text to the reasoned opinion extends well beyond the problem of the missing secondary legislation. It presents principles and arguments in an authoritative way and brings up the ECJ cases to indicate what might follow if the case was handed over to the ECJ. The EU

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[79] The EU Commission refers to the cases C-274/05 and C-151/07

Commission's approach can be interpreted as almost 'intimidating', and is often grounded in the ECJ's jurisprudence from areas of the free market and the trade in services.[80]

9.5 The clash and hierarchy of ideas in the EU legal framework

Throughout the infringement procedure, the EU Commission invoked selected TFEU articles, Services Directive provisions and ECJ rulings (linked to the recognition of education certificates), without mentioning the relevant TFEU Articles 165 (education), Article 166 (vocational training). These two are the most important provisions of Article 165:

Article 165 (§1): *"The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the member states for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity."*

Article 165 (§4): *"The European Parliament and the Council [...] shall adopt measures to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the member states..."*

However, the EU Commission based its case on different parts of the TFEU. The case 2011/4027 is grounded on the articles of the TFEU about the freedom of establishment (Article 49) and the freedom to provide services (Article 56). In addition, the EU Commission invokes parts of the Services Directive selectively. Basing its infringement procedure on Articles 10, 13 and 16, it fails to mention that education is considered outside the scope of the Directive within two paragraphs of its preamble, namely §34 and §40. The former emphasizes that education, among other *"activities which are publicly funded or provided by public entities"* is *"not covered by the definition of service"* in Article 57 of the TFEU and does *"not...fall within the scope of this Directive"*. The latter invokes the concept of *overriding reasons relating to the public interest* as a possible justification for limiting the scope of the Service Directive and in

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[80] The analysis of the case was performed in the summer of 2014. At that stage the EU Commission had not yet handed the case to the ECJ, neither has the parliament of Slovenia adopted the requested amendments to the law.

fact lists explicitly the *"need to ensure a high level of education"* among such possible justifications.

Thus in both the TFEU and the Services directive there are provisions that grant a special status to education stemming from the social and cultural norms and specifics of the EU member states. Seemingly (higher) education is well protected from the penetration of market (de)regulation, which was also partly the result of the resistance of some countries and the transnational (European) civil society to the proliferation of market principles and mechanisms to the domains of services and institutions of public good and general interest (see below).

There is another seemingly minor detail that marks the exchange between the EU Commission and Slovenia. It is the DG MARKT (responsible for internal markets) and not the DG Education and Culture that runs the Infringement case on behalf of the EU Commission. Comparing the discourse of the DG EAC to the one from the texts of the Infringement Procedure, the difference is substantial. Below there are some elements and interpretations from the discourse and the substantive content of ideas in the texts of the letters that the DG MARKT addressed to the Government of Slovenia.

9.5.1 Defining the rules of the game by the 'country of origin' principle

Despite the absence of a binding regulation on the mutual recognition of accreditation in higher education, it seems from the infringement procedure 2011/4027 that the EU Commission developed its arguments around the 'country of origin' principle, normally applied in the cases of cross-border trade in goods and services.

The most commonly referred to form of transnational education in the infringement procedure 2011/4027 was the franchise agreement type of cross-border educational activity. In the footnote of the Reasoned Opinion, the commission defined the franchise as follows:

> *Under "franchising", in principle (as there may be various modifications to this model), an existing programme of study offered by an institution awarding the diploma is submitted to be run at a partner institution under the supervision of the awarding institution and ends with a diploma awarded by the awarding institution. The characteristic element is that one educational institution (the franchisee) is responsible*

for the day-to-day running of a programme of study and the other educational institution (the franchisor) awards the diploma at its completion and therefore guarantees the quality of the programme offered (EU Commission 2013).

This clarification is underpinned by an ECJ case[81] that defined the franchise as belonging to the education system of the franchise-awarding institution and therefore not under the jurisdiction of the authorities on the territory where the franchise-holder is carrying out the educational programme. Thus the EU Commission views transnational higher education as part of the country of origin education system which does not need to align itself with the host country higher education laws in order to perform higher education on its territory.

9.5.2 The lack of legal clarity of the Directives and the principle of *proportionality*

The Services Directive in Article 16 (§3) determines the conditions in which member states can impose limits on its application when specific goals of public interest are pursued (*"The member state to which the provider moves shall not be prevented from imposing requirements with regard to the provision of a service activity, where they are justified for reasons of public policy, public security, public health or the protection of the environment..."*). However, the same Article also states that such limits should always observe "necessity" and "proportionality". These are both ill-defined categories of a subjective nature.

Due to such lack of legal clarity, the Services Directive leaves the door open for dispute on what constitutes public interest in a specific member state, with a specific cultural and historical legacy. In both, the formal notice and reasoned opinion, the EU Commission recognised the competence of member states for assuring high standards of university education. However, with reference to the ECJ ruling in the case *Neri vs. European School of Economics* (ECJ 2003), the EU Commission argued that the restrictions should not exceed what is necessary to achieve the goals (in this case, high standards of university education).

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[81] The ruling of the case C-151/07 Khatzithanasis also clarifies that the country of origin principle in the case of franchise agreements does not affect the jurisdiction of the host country over the content of teaching and the organization of the education system because the franchise awarding institution is also the awarder of the degree and therefore the degree belongs to the system of the country of origin and not to the system where the programmes are actually provided. The case is based on the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications and refers to the recognition of the degrees obtained at a franchise holding institution.

The decision on proportionality is in the hands of the ECJ, thus in case of a legal dispute, it is the ECJ (and not the authorities of the member state concerned) that has the authority to decide what is a 'necessary' and what is an 'excessive' requirement (or restriction) in view of achieving high standards of university education. In other words, due to the lack of clarity of the Directive, it is up to the judgement of the ECJ to define what it takes to secure the public good or when a requirement for a high level of educational standards becomes a restriction to the free trade in services.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the grey zones and uncertainties in the definitions of the Directives have represented a reason for the tension in other cases and has often led to the communicative interaction of a conflict nature during the process of the adoption of legal acts within the EU (Crespy 2010, 1255). One of the most prominent examples that surfaced during the coordination and negotiations around the Services Directive was well described in the statement of an interest-group representative (see below) after the first reading in the EP:

The question of whether educational activities are covered by the Directive depends on whether the given course of education falls within the category of Services of General Interest (SGI) or the category of Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI), with the former excluded and the latter covered by the Directive. No legal basis exists however for the definition of SGI or SGEI; the definition rests on the case-by-case judgements of the European Court of Justice. Although member states have the right to define their national application of the categories SGI/SGEI in accordance with Community law, it is ultimately the ECJ who decides in case of disputes about the national definitions (ETUCE statement, 11.5.2006).

9.5.3 The collision of the normalised market ideas with the standing normative/institutional settings in Europe and the resistance of national and transnational civil societies

The Services Directive was negotiated for a longer period before being carried within the designated institutions. During the run up to the adoption on the Directive, there was intensive communicative and coordinative action. The bottom up communicative activity was

outstanding in the countries with a strong trade union tradition and traditional scepticism towards the proliferation of trade agreements and liberalisation. The argument and contestation was directed especially towards the murky waters of the distinction between economic and non-economic services of general interest which has long been a 'grey area' in the ECJ case-law (Crespy 2010, 1255). In France for example, the Directive was feared to strike directly into the crucial normative issues and thereby grassroots movements, unions and also the general public were mobilised. The proposed Services Directive became a symbol of the tension between EU competition rules and national regulations; between the internal market and the national 'social models' and, eventually, between the contrasting ideas of a 'liberal Europe' and a 'social Europe' (Crespy 2010, 1256).

The rebellious communicative action also resonated in the sector of education at the EU level. On behalf of the trade unions, the initiative was taken by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE). The ETUCE is the European wing of Education International. It is the teachers' social partner at the European level and a defender of teachers' interests to the EU Commission and represents member organizations in EU consultative structures and at EU meetings.[82] One cannot say that the ETUCE is a typical organisation that mobilises the bottom-up (grassroots) communication, but is rather a participant in the coordinative sphere, where the ideas are deliberated and negotiated through a coordinative discourse. It gets involved in the coordinative action within the constellation of the EU institutions, especially the EU Commission.

However, from the discourse in the analysed documents it is possible to interpret the discursive interaction of the ETUCE as hybrid, thus both 1) communicative by mediating the members political communication towards the decision making fora at the EU level; and 2) coordinative by participating in the consultation process, interest group pressures, negotiations, etc. The normative ideational charge of the ETUCE input indicates the normative intensity of the coordinative discourse around the process of deliberating the proposed Services Directive:

ETUCE strongly opposes the neo-liberal agenda and the lack of social concerns evident in the text of the draft Directive. The economic boost, in the expectation of which the

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[82] The ETUCE is composed of national trade unions of teachers and other staff in general education - early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, vocational education and training as well as higher education and research. The ETUCE is also a European Trade Union Federation of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). http://etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE_AboutETUCE.html (27.3.2014).

provisions of the draft Directive is justified by its defenders, would be achieved by way of competition on the basis of the lowest standards, not by way of the development of a genuinely sustainable, knowledge-based competitive economy which Europe needs (ETUCE 2005).

The discourse invoked the grand idea of a social Europe as an adversary ideational position to the 'neoliberal agenda' which in their view 'lacks social concerns'. The 'social Europe' idea is interestingly espoused with the knowledge society and competitiveness discourse as opposed to the rejected 'neoliberal agenda'. This shows the acceptance of the dominant imaginary of the Knowledge economy, but dissonance in its interpretation.

One of the major concerns in the resolution is the possible take up of competences to the EU level:

The division of competences between member states and the EU in the area of education should be respected. Education is the competence of member states, while the EU's role is to promote cooperation and to complement member states in the development of quality education by adopting recommendations and incentive measures. Education should not fall under legally binding directives within the EU trade policy (ETUCE 2005).

From the logic of communication it is possible to interpret the awareness of the actors involved that the tendency of market (de)regulation also impinges on the domains of public interest such as education, healthcare, audio-visual art etc. A central argumentative device running through the discourse in the resolution was that keeping education in the realm of responsibilities of the member states that would safeguard it from the 'lack of social concerns' pertaining to the 'neoliberal agenda'. Thus, the ideational content of the ETUCE's discourse is following the appropriateness logic by referring to the *EU of equality, social cohesion, high standards of social rights, and respect for cultural diversity*.

A few months later the EU Commission responded with a short letter. The discursive style of the letter pretty much fitted the above-presented description of the EU institutions' general coordinative discourse, i.e. technocratic and seemingly depoliticized, often openly grounded in the rational argument (cognitive ideas). The main tone of the letter was aiming at tranquilising the heated political action of the ETUCE by denying the intention to liberalise trade in educational services:

[...] even if education is not excluded from the scope of application of the draft Services Directive by the European Parliament, the entry into force of the Directive would in no way lead to liberalisation or diminishment of core public services.[83]

This implies that the EU Commission insisted on not excluding all types of education from the directive, but instead excluding publicly funded services of general interest. The letter is inconclusive and does not bring up any concrete stand point or intention of the EU Commission during the process.

A year later, in May 2006, after the Services Directive proposal passed the first reading in the EU Parliament and was amended by the EU Commission, the ETUCE executive board issued a statement regarding the latter. In this letter the ETUCE brought up the voids that the EU Commission left in the proposed Services directive. Considering the Infringement Procedure 1011/2047, the ETUCE demonstrated an almost prophetic ability to predict the future:

[...] numerous uncertainties remain regarding how the Directive will affect the education sector. The consequence of these legal uncertainties will undoubtedly be an increased number of court cases at the European Court of Justice (ECJ) determining the application of the EU trade and competition laws in the education sectors at national level. Based on the firm belief that the power to organise, fund, and regulate the education sectors should lie fully with national governments, ETUCE strongly calls on the Council of Ministers to secure a complete exclusion of the education sector from the draft Services Directive (ETUCE 2006).

9.6 The relevance of the analysed Directives, the ECJ jurisprudence and the Infringement procedure for this study

The ideas, imaginaries and paradigms related to market integration and free trade in services are the central integrative forces of the EU. They have gradually been normalised and thereby they have been taking over the hegemonic status in the EU institutional setting. The EU laws and regulations that cover the sectors related to the market and free trade have also penetrated

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[83] The letter MR/af/8554 sent by the EU Commission to the ETUCE on 4.8.2005 was obtained on the basis of the courtesy of the ETUCE staff

into the domain of education, at least when it comes to the provision of transnational forms of higher education.

From the historical role of the ECJ and from the analysis of the selected ECJ cases it is possible to interpret the presence of the ideational or ideological bias of the jurisprudence and a certain degree of judicial activism of the ECJ. The judges easily take over the dominant programmatic ideas and mainstream economic paradigms that belong to the integrative idea on market freedoms. These are regarded as superior to the social and cultural concerns related to the matter of judgement. Nevertheless, it would be reductionist to attribute any significant agency to the ECJ members. Their decisions are often (in a technocratic fashion) following the fundamental integrative norms and institutions, amongst which the market integration paradigm dominates. They are filling the voids left by the EU laws (Directives) and thus are left to rely on radically simplified propositions about the economic world. Thereby the ECJ is easily prey to the hegemonic discourses and the underlying social forces.

However, there is more agency to be found when the activities of the ECJ and the EU Commission are considered jointly. From the examined ECJ cases and the Infringement procedure against Slovenia it is possible observe how the EU Commission was advancing the market norms through contesting case by case the obstacles to trade in educational services (all the way to bringing them to court). The rulings that the EU Commission used to argue in the Infringement procedure were the results of cases often filed by the EU Commission itself. It is possible to interpret a pattern of the role division between the two institutions when it comes to advancing the integration process through the common market. The Directive adopted in the EU institutions states the general principles favouring the advance of free movements and market integration. The EU Commission follows up on the implementation of the market principles and takes care of the alleged infringements. In the case of disputes, the ECJ takes over and decides case by case, thereby building up the missing laws in the ideational spirit which in turn suits the powerful normalising (hegemonic) ideas on market freedoms.

The trend of taking up the competences through the open directive and the subsequent ECJ rulings was also brought about by the ETUCE, the European representative trade union for education. The ETUCE took over some national concerns and indicated the trend and mechanisms of advancing the "neoliberal model" at the expense of social and cultural concerns of the national normative settings.

In the conclusion of this chapter it is possible to observe the trend of the powers and competences over higher education slipping from the hands of the member states to the EU institutions. The ECJ rulings on higher education are not soft law, neither are the EU Directives. The (de)regulation transnational provision of higher education became part of EU hard law and therewith the hegemony of the market model in regulating the transnational higher education industry is secured from the potential attempts of member states to undo it. Thus it is possible to conclude that the new constitutional trend reaches beyond the mere soft regulatory mechanisms such as the open method of coordination or the policy goals of the Bologna Process.

Part III

10. The institutional context and the "traditional" ideas of university in Europe

This chapter is the first in a series of chapters where I theorised the findings from Part II. I started with the institutional context in which the interactive process of discourse in the higher education policy and political arena has taken place and which is being challenged by the shifts in social forces and the rise of new material, ideational and institutional order. In the analytical approach of this dissertation, the institution is seen as both a structure of meaning and a construct of meaning, and is therefore constituted and constitutive of discourses. Analysing and interpreting institutional background and larger historical structures is relevant for this analysis because it represents the context in which the discursive action is taking place, and where ideas are conveyed in an attempt to bring about changes (or continuity) of these same institutions and larger structures.

10.1 Higher education as part of the institutional fabric: constituting continuity and subject to change

Higher education, in particular university as institution, can be considered an integral part of a larger configuration of institutions. Transformations in higher education are part of the processes of change in this larger institutional structure (Olsen 2007, 25). Well entrenched institutions reflect a historical experience of a community resistant to rapid changes and take part in a long-term socio-cultural engagement. The ideational approach, including discursive institutionalism, aims at understanding the change in the institutions/structures which occur in the transitional periods, when the equilibrium is weak and the old institutions go through crisis. According to Blyth (2011), crises lead to loosening the structural constrains and leave the possibility for larger shifts leading to new order. These are the trigger moments for the new ideas to emerge and contest the established order of institutions which are not only structures of meaning, but become also the construct of meaning, constructed discursively through a particular logic of communication (Schmidt 2008).

10.2 The higher education tradition in Europe and pertaining norms and values

It is an ultimately demanding task to conceptualise the values and norms that constitute the body of the European higher education tradition. Considering the variation of the university models across the continent, it is even more difficult to reconcile the notions of *traditional*, *European* and *university* into one concept. However, this study is based on the discursive institutionalist analysis of the interactive process of discourse in the European policy and political spheres. Within this perimeter, I identified and heuristically organised the ideational streams that clearly indicate the normative and value-based ideas on the university that transcend the geographical delineations and can be viewed as historically embedded.

The four purposes of the university stated in the Bologna Process documents (London Communiqué 2007) can be interpreted as one of the strongest attempts to call upon the university as an institution with many purposes and roles in contemporary society. In several sections of this dissertation I characterised the multipurpose ideation of higher education as the counterbalance to the recent economically instrumentalist ideation of the university and to the

ideation of higher education as a market-based service. But how do these purposes relate to the framework of norms, values, beliefs and historic continuity? What were the institutional context and the ideational trends that normalised these values? In order to answer this, I delved into the nature and origins of the norms and values that constitute the traditional institutional identity of the university.

10.2.1 Liberal humanist ideation of university in the 19th century

The institutional identity and constitutive logic of what is today considered a traditional university can be interpreted as a sort of continuity of the 19th century variety of ideations of the university. In this historically eventful period, university re-emerged as an integral institution after a period of decline. It is difficult to use a proper term to characterise the institutional and normative background to this ideation, especially because it is referred to in different ways throughout the literature. It is indeed closely interwoven with the European humanist tradition, influenced by the Enlightenment and later the liberal thought of the 19th century. But the story is a bit more structured and complex than it might appear at the first glance.

The same Renascence, humanist and Enlightenment thoughts resulted in many practical implementations and gave birth to a number of programmatic and policy ideas. For example, prior to the 19th century, the university as an institution was in decline precisely because of the re-imagining knowledge in the empiricist zeitgeist and political thought such as e.g. utilitarianism and early liberal ideas. John Locke, a great empiricist thinker of that time, proposed valuing knowledge in accordance with the wealth that it brings (Marginson 2008, 2). Especially in the Enlightenment political movement, research became closely identified with its practical benefits which resulted in a great number of inventions and innovations occurring outside the university. In addition the university was viewed as the site for generating state officials, clergy and professionals such as doctors and teachers (Renaut 2002, 121; Zonta 2002, 33). In this period Lyotard identified the sprouting of the grand narrative of performativity that re-emerged so central in the post-modern condition two centuries later. In the period of the industrial revolution at the end of the 18th century, the nexus between technology and profit preceded its union with science. It was more the desire for wealth than the desire for knowledge

that initially forced upon the technology the imperative of performance improvement and product realisation (Lyotard 1984, 45).

The crucial period for the revival of the university as an institution was the 19th century. The 19th century Europe was marked by a large-scale socio-economic dynamics. The utterly changed material relations and the restructuring of the society were closely intertwined with the emerging of new political ideas and changing institutional setting. The Enlightenment thought has powered the ideas on public role of science and scholarship, teaching and research. The idea that knowledge can be at the same time authoritative and democratic, coupled with the idea that it can simultaneously inform expert instrumental use and public debate, brought the university to the core of the grand ideas and projects of the time (Calhoun, 2006a, 8). Universities became important foci of both local, urban, civic and national ambitions and public discourse (ibid, 16). In Western Europe the university often represented a site of critical thought, nurturing new ideals, political movements and insurgence against the old absolutist order (Rüegg 2004, 26). At the same time the university was trusted the task of pushing forward the frontier of science without direct external pressures or obligations. In this period of considerable shifts in the social forces, the state and the university found a new model of dialectic relation – a new contract. This was however varying from nation to nation.

The 19th century idealist thinkers underlined the idea of the university as the soul of the institution, essential for its existence and without which it would be reduced to a mechanical, soulless organisation (Habermas and Blazek 1987, 3). This identity was constructed upon shared commitment to scholarship and learning, basic research and search for truth irrespective of immediate utility, political convenience or economic benefits (Olsen 2007, 29). University was supposed to benefit society as a whole and not specific "stakeholders", it was meant to be open to all qualified and, according the liberal notion of citizenship, promote the enlightenment of citizens (Scott 1993, 22). In a way, university of liberal humanist ideational origins served the purpose of materialising the grand narratives legitimating knowledge: On the one hand, knowledge was narrated as the way out of darkness, the emancipation of human beings from slavery of ignorance and the progress for all humanity and nations; while on the other hand, knowledge was legitimised by the grand narrative of spiritual and moral training of the emerging nations (Lyotard 1984, 32).

These narratives prevailed especially in the case of the German reform of the university – perhaps the most emblematic and influential in the modern period of the 19th century. It

followed mostly the lines of idealist thinkers like Schelling and von Humboldt who refused the state specialised colleges and conceptualised the university and knowledge in four unities: the unity of research and teaching, the unity of disciplines, the unity of science and general education, and finally, the unity of science and enlightenment (Habermas and Blazek 1987, 11). The essence of Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea was a formula that protected universities from losing their right to advance and disseminate science and scholarship while preserving its economic autonomy and independence from political and religious authority regarding the content and modes of scholarly and scientific work:

Insofar as science and scholarship are kept free of corruption, they will be correctly apprehended in their essential nature and as a whole, whatever the variations in particular instances (von Humboldt 1970, 243).

Von Humboldt used a generic term *higher intellectual institutions* for various sub-types of these institutions. In his discourse, the scientific and scholarly activity at the highest forms was at the centre. To this end, scientist and scholars, after appointed, should be able to create without any sort of state organisational or utilitarian pressure. Only this way could they best serve the state and society:

The state must always remain conscious of the fact that it never has and in principle never can, by its own action, bring about the fruitfulness of intellectual activity. It must indeed be aware that it can only have a prejudicial influence if it intervenes. The state must understand that intellectual work will go on infinitely better if it does not intrude (von Humboldt 1970, 244).

Science and scholarship became the propulsive element in the ideation of the nation state. German universities marked the centre of scientific progress and contributed immensely to the nation's recovery after a turbulent period and the new political and economic strength of nation (Zgaga 2009, 178). They represented the unification of moral dimension and the search for truth in the pursuit of the meta-principle that simultaneously grounded the development of learning, society and state (Lyotard 1984, 34).

The German idea had by no means stopped at the borders of the empire. It had a deeper meaning for the European tradition of university. With the implementation of von Humboldt's idea, the university as an institution was rescued from falling into oblivion (Rüegg 2002, 46). University was re-invented and ideated as a constitutive element of the European nation state – a new

hegemonic imaginary. University as an institution adapted to a changing configuration of social forces and historical structures. The idea of the unity of knowledge spilled over to other European countries and to the US. For example, by the end of the century, the French *Third Republic* restored the university parallel to the state professional colleges (Renaut 2002, 122).

The 19th century ideation of the university contains also other dimensions that influenced the today's normative framework of the university as an institution. The idea of centrality of science and scholarship was endorsed also by Cardinal John Henry Newman, who viewed knowledge as capable of being its own end thus opposing John Locke's argument that knowledge should be 'useful' and that learning should be judged according to its contribution to wealth[84] (Marginson 2008, 2). But the highlight of Newman's thought on university is epitomised in another powerful idea: Besides accentuating the scientific and scholarly activity, he viewed the university as site of developing a fully cultivated individual and intellectual instead of individuals being trained for specific purposes or professions (Newman 1996, 118). Acquiring manners for gentlemen can only occur through physical presence at the university - a venue of "communication and circulation of thought, by means of personal intercourse, through a wide extent of country" (Newman 1879, 6).

The universities, especially the most elite ones (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, etc.) sought to introduce the core curriculum for enabling the well-educated individual (Husen 1991, 182). Newman's view is perhaps one of the most eloquent indicators of the elite nature of the idea of university in the 19th century bourgeoisie society infused with the liberal intellectual fashion. The formation of the gentlemen through acquiring the adequate manners reminds the creation and/or reproduction of the state elite so well described by Bourdieu (1996).

Another nuance of the liberal (19th century) ideation of the university that settled deep into the norms and institutions of modern times is related to the notion of citizenship. The idea of the university as a contributor to the development of active citizenship can appear as a recent instrumental ideation of higher education, but it is actually not. This element of the liberal idea is stronger in the US where the state has never been involved as deeply in higher education as it was the case in Europe[85]. Higher education in Europe has traditionally taken part in civil society which formed a sort of counterbalancing authority to the state (Zgaga 2009, 180). This

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[84] Newman and Locke were however not contemporaries. In addition, Newman stood out for being a high-ranking Catholic priest in Anglican England.

[85] An outstanding author on ideation of university as site for development of citizenship was John Dewey.

alludes to the idea that the premise of democracy includes tension and divergence of standards. At the same time, the advance of democracy necessitates an institution that establishes a common frame of reference of standards, norms and beliefs without which it cannot survive (Husen 1991, 182).

The study of the 19th century revival of the university as institution and the pertaining norms and values shows that this ideation has to a great extent lived up to date and represents a value and normative background to the recent political and policy action. Zgaga (2009) proposed a direct link between the main ideas of the university in the 19th century and the modern view of higher education as a multipurpose institution:

- preparation for sustainable employment;
- preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- personal development;
- development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

This definition was in this study identified as the symbol of reference for the traditional European values on higher education and a symbolic tool in the discursive interaction in the Bologna Process - the coordinative arena of European higher education policy making. It was used to counterbalance the ideational trends of commodification and economic instrumentalisation of higher education in the process of negotiation and deliberation of the reform plan (see Chapter 4 and 5). The principal promoter of the multipurpose higher education has been the Council of Europe[86] - the organisation that is set up to advance the liberal and democratic ideas (Melo 2013).

Except for the purpose under the first bullet point, all of the purposes are comparable to the 19th century ideations of the university and higher education. In heuristic terms, it is possible to interpret the second point as linked to Dewey's idea of university encouraging citizenship, the third point to Newman's idea of the venue where manners and cultivated personality are developed, while the fourth point can be linked to the idea of unity of knowledge and disinterested advance of science and scholarship found in the thoughts of Wilhelm von Humboldt.

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[86] Recommendation CM/Rec (2007)6 on the public responsibility for higher education and research

Perhaps one might risk excessive trivialising of the complexity of the institutions and norms by claiming direct parallels between the normative ideas of the 19th century and those of today. Nevertheless, the liberal humanist ideas on university can be considered an important part of the ideational background - a stable institutional context that resists the quick and radical changes and at the same time informs the agency in the political processes. In Schmidt's (2008) terms, this represents the background that the actors with their background ideational abilities used in the coordinative discursive interaction with other actors in the European policy (coordinative) arena. Yet in the chapters of Part II I showed that this institutional background is challenged, in decline, and therefore vulnerable to the penetration and normalization of new (cognitive) ideas.

10.2.2 Magna Charta Universitatum – the (revived) transnational articulation of liberal humanist ideas on university

Due to considerable cultural and historic diversity in Europe, establishing a common normative denominator that would represent a pan-European university is a challenging task. Perhaps the closest to what one can call the pan-European articulation of the consensus on European university values is the Magna Charta Universitatum, signed in 1988, on the occasion of 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna, by a number of European universities from both sides of the Iron curtain. At this point I would like to underline that despite frequent association to the Bologna Process of 1999, Magna Charta Universitatum has little or nothing in common with the latter.

Before presenting the institutional background and ideational content of the discourse used in the Magna Charta, it is absolutely essential to consider the historical context of the meeting of signatory universities in 1998 in Bologna. According to one of the protagonists of the initiative, an important purpose of the Charta was to contribute to the end of the Cold War and the hegemony of the liberal democratic institutional setting with market economy in the centre:

The Magna Charta Universitatum had been signed in the last days of the East-West divide
[...] this first document of 1988 has been drafted mainly by advocates of liberal
democracy market economists, i.e. not envisaging democracy as inceptive prerequisite to

any reform. Inside the Magana Charta Observatory[87] debates were quite different. Before I took the presidency, there were at least two camps, if not more, one of them strongly advocating academic freedom, the other more focused on autonomy (Interview 15[88]).

The discursive action and ideas were thus locked in the political context of the Cold War where the winning side (the West) tried to spread the ideational hegemony to the collapsing Eastern state-institutional arrangements. According to the above cited interlocutor, the word democracy (in any grammatical form) is not used even once in the whole document in order to avoid resistance from the *Eastern Bloc* authorities. Thus, if to believe this source, Magna Charta is an example of the discursive action with the aim to divulge the normative ideas, or better the ideological and cultural platform of the liberal democracies of the West across the Iron Curtain and through the intellectual sphere.

Today the Magna Charta Universitatum is often viewed as a document that conceptualized university as an internal rule-governed institution with the constitutive academic identity, purposes and principles of its own and therefore at odds with the new order based upon commercial principles (Olsen and Maassen 2007, 10).

The four fundamental principles of the Magna Charta correspond with the ideas and discourses that in the Bologna Process discursive interaction counterbalanced the economic instrumentalism and commodification of higher education. The first principle emphasises the cultural (rather than narrow economic) purpose of the university and the principle of autonomous space of scientific and scholarly work. The latter, in conjunction with the unity of knowledge in the second principle, and the third principle which emphasises the academic freedom, evoke the von Humboldt's ideation of university:

1. The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the

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[87] Magna Charta Observatory was created with the aim to gather information, express opinions and prepare documents relating to the respect for, and protection of, the fundamental university values and rights laid down in the Magna Charta Universitatum.

[88] The information was provided in an in-person conversation and later through e-mail correspondence by a former rector who was involved in the Magna Charta Universitatum initiative in 1988. The conversation was not officially an interview, but rather an informal exchange. For the purpose of this dissertation I nevertheless marked it as interview in order to simplify the data classification system.

world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.

2. Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge.

3. Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement. Rejecting intolerance and always open to dialogue, a university is an ideal meeting-ground for teachers capable of imparting their knowledge and well equipped to develop it by research and innovation and students entitled, able and willing to enrich their minds with that knowledge (Magna Charta Universitatum 1988).

The fourth fundamental principle of the Magna Charta Universitatum is especially interesting for the argument of this chapter. It explicitly names the worldview and philosophical ideas underlying the traditional European university, it closely connects the university to the European cultural and philosophical identity, and relates it to other cultural formations:

4. A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other (Magna Charta Universitatum 1988).

Magna Charta Universitatum can thus be interpreted as a trans-European academic document in which the normative ideas of philosophical level are articulated and communicated to the broader political community. This document represents a reference point for understanding the institutional background and the agency - the *background ideational abilities* of some actors in the contemporary coordinative discourses in the European higher education policy arena. In the Bologna political interaction actors base their discursive strategy on the normative type of ideas stemming from the institutional context set by the document signed by University Rectors in 1988 (see the findings of Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7). Among these actors we can find the Council of Europe, the Student and Teacher unions, some national delegations, and to an extent, the European University Association.

10.2.3 The World War II aftermaths, the egalitarian values and the role of higher education

The second element of the institutional context incorporates the shifts that lead to opening access and increased interest for enrolment into higher education. Namely, the typical Western university of the 19th and early 20th centuries was a socially and intellectually elitist institution (Husen 1991, 176). Higher education represented the venue where intellectual elite nurtured its manners and social networks, but also where typically elitist state professionals and clergy were trained (Renaut 2002, 121; Kerr 1987,188).

In the second half of the 20th century the enrolment rates to the universities of Western Europe and the US started to increase[89] (Kerr 1987; Scott 1998; Zgaga 2007). As in other presented phenomena in higher education, it is difficult to establish linear causal relationships. Material relations in the contemporary economy and the increased necessity for highly trained workers can be one of the causes, but as concluded in many parts of this study, are not enough to account for the outset of the phenomenon of massification and expansion of higher education in the Western world. Despite the fact that many interpretations attribute the increasing enrolments to the shifts in economy/production and competition of nations/blocks, the massification of higher education can be to a great extent attributed to the accentuation of egalitarian values and norms as a consequence of the conflicts and social tensions that escalated in the first half of the 20th century.

The widely accepted doctrine of equal opportunity in the US (Kerr 1987, 188) and the European social democratic turn saw higher education as one of the primary means for emancipation of economically disadvantaged social groups. Universities became institutions that crucially contributed to social emancipation (Scott 1998, 111). The mission of supporting political health of a nation by creating greater opportunity for vertical social mobility and breaking down the hereditary class lines gained in importance and added a strong dimension to the ideation of higher education in the Western liberal world after World War II (Kerr 1987, 183; Calhoun 2006a, 10).

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[89] Massification was not an entirely new phenomenon when it appeared in the Western world. For example, in many Latin American countries, massification or better de-elitisation of universities started already in the 1920s with the 1918 reform in Argentina (the so-called *Cordoba reform*).

10.2.4 Tension between liberal humanist and egalitarian (welfare state) ideation of higher education

The massification of higher education is somehow naturally at odds with the liberal view on generating state elite. For example, in Germany the opening of the university to a broader array of social groups contributed to the dismantling of the traditional social structures. Thereby this process took away from university the role of generating state elite (Habermas and Blazek 1987, 6). But this is true not only for the German context. In the Western world an even lesser share of students come from or - and this is a big shift – end up in the elite. Higher education has become a norm, and encompasses students from diverse social backgrounds feeding into an ever more diversified world of work (Scott 1998, 114).

However, the tension between liberal ideation of university democratisation of higher education is not completely insurmountable. The two ideational streams reconciled through the idea of the above presented notion of citizenship. The institutional setting of the Western world after the two world wars encompassed greater emphasis on collective citizenship and social literacy which are considered essential for the stability of liberal democracies and, therefore, public goods that are preconditioned by the mechanisms of socialisation such as higher education (Marginson 2013, 11). The liberal project somehow culminated in widely accessible universities – a final stage of a long march from ignorance to enlightenment (Scott 1993, 22). Massification can be therefore interpreted and understood through both social emancipation/democratisation and liberal ideal of national institution and philosophical sets of ideas which at the same time can be considered the institutional background for contemporary changes. The university as an institution was set on the decisive route towards democratisation.

The increased democratic and social roles of the university resulted also in the enhanced intimacy between the state and the university which manifested especially through the almost exclusive public responsibility for funding (Scott 1998, 110). University had been connected to the state in one way or another for centuries already and especially since the 19th century revival, but the second half of the 20th century brought them together closer than ever before[90]. This closeness provides an important clue in interpreting the concepts of social dimension and public responsibility for higher education that appeared as discursive regularities during the Bologna Process (Chapter 4).

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[90] Until a certain point when new ideas started to proliferate (see below)

10.3 Higher education and the public good

Researchers in higher education and other fields have for long time strived to conceptualise the role of higher education in serving the public good (Marginson 2013; Pusser 2006; Nixon 2011). The notion of public good and its relation to higher education have been used in various contexts and defined by various theoretical schools, recently especially those from the field of economics. In the analyses of the data collected and selected for the purpose of this study, the reference to higher education as public good appears as a discursive regularity in the interactive process of discourse in the policy and political arenas. As presented in Chapters 5 and 6, it regularly marks the discourse that antagonises both the instrumental view on higher education in the knowledge economy and the commodification of higher education. Moreover, the contribution of higher education to the public good has been intensively re-contextualised in some discursive actions aiming at normalising the cognitive ideas of educational cost sharing between state and the private purse.

But before presenting the institutional role and the reconstruction of the meaning of public good let us have a brief historic overview of this important notion for the Western civilisation. Public good can be considered a typical concept closely linked to the structures of meaning and constructs derived from the dominant discourses and ideas of the time. In ancient Greece, philosophers considered the public good a contested space that was disputed philosophically, discursively, and politically. Plato initiated the debate over public good in social and political life, engendering the multiple understandings of public good that are still present today (Pusser 2006, 13). In the Middle Ages, philosophers stressed the contrast of private goods of the ruling classes as opposed to the good of the public, which gradually crystallised into denominating those actions designed to benefit the broader community. Only with Adam Smith's ideas did the private gain coincide with the public interest thus, imagining private action as enhancing the public good, which was ideated above private good (Ibid.).

The liberal thought persisted through the centuries of social and political unrests in the Western world and gradually brought about a broadly accepted imagining of public good as a good that, being more than the aggregate of individual interests, denotes a common commitment to social justice and equity (Nixon 2011, 1). However, it is difficult to talk about a general consensus over the notion of public good. Despite strong roots of the ideation of modern state and the

prevailing liberal orientation of the hegemonic imaginaries of the Western world of the 20th century, there has been no agreed nomenclature for a comprehensive grasp of public good (Marginson 2013, 2). It has been rather up to various normative ideas in the political sphere (often ideologically locked) to refine the definition of what is or should be the public good. In addition, the dominant schools from the field of economics often claim the monopoly on defining public good.

Although higher education has been considered one of the central institutions of the developing nation state since the 19th century (and therefore a relatively fixed institutional element), the contribution of higher education to the public good in the 20th century liberal democratic state has been imagined with a range of variations and coexisting ideas. The discourse on higher education as public good can carry different ideational patterns and levels of ideas, most of them imagining higher education as an essential element of the contemporary state.

University as site of essential knowledge production has been closely related to the general public interest and thereby to the public good (Pusser 2006, 17; Calhoun 2006a, 19). However, the advance of knowledge and research as a contribution to general wealth and humanity has its flipside: the necessity to reach out to the broader population, to share the knowledge and thereby emancipate the people (Calhoun 2006a, 19). Equality and egalitarian values are the key normative element of the public good discourse and often condition other public goods, such as e.g. social literacy and collective citizenship (Marginson 2013, 11). Namely, wider access is the precondition for higher education to affect the citizenship and social literacy. The human development and self-fulfilment has been normalised as a public good, achieved also through higher education (Nixon 2011). Nixon's (2011) argument evolves from an imaginative understanding of what it means to be human and what to develop as a human being in the 21th century. He postulated:

> [...] *that human beings develop relationally through social, civic and cosmopolitan interconnectivities; that each person's development contributes to the development of others; that education is the process, more or less formalised, by which the public good of human development is nourished and sustained; and that higher education is one phase of that process and marks the transition for the students concerned from formal education into a more complex institutional pattern of learning environments* (Nixon 2011, 65).

The idea of self-fulfilment of human beings is also present in the Bologna Process (and the Council of Europe) multipurpose definition of higher education (London Communiqué 2007), elaborated in several sections of this dissertation.

As I analysed in Chapter 5, the access and democratisation of higher education coexisted with the humanist liberal view of research and academic community in the grand liberal democratic project of the post-World War II Western world. General education of citizens and a wide distribution of knowledge mean empowerment of citizens and are pronounced the guiding principle of democracy (Calhoun 2006a, 19). Citizenship is thus an important connecting element between higher education and the public good. In the imagined liberal democratic institutional order the interdependence between democracy and active citizenship is essential. It is expected to allow the systemic match between the public, the wealth and the state (Nixon 2011, 16). The Western liberal democracy has been gradually connected with the idea of university as the venue of critical reflection, argument and active citizenship - an institution of public sphere (Pusser 2006).

This brings us to Jurgen Habermas's conceptualisation, suggesting that alongside state and private interests there exists another dimension – the public sphere – of which university is a crucial element. In the public sphere, public interaction, confrontation, argument, deliberation and critical reflection take place, thereby allowing contestation/questioning of the nature of the state and private interest (Habermas and Blazek 1987; Pusser 2006, 18; Marginson 2013, 10). The flourishing of critical reflexivity and engagement of the public sphere depends upon autonomy at individual, institutional and social levels. Therefore, the university is (in this imaginary) a crucial institution of the public sphere and thus necessarily autonomous from the state (Pusser 2006). University is thus imagined conceived as a paradigmatic institution of the public sphere essentially contributing to the public good. It is supposed to inform the public sphere and prepare citizens to actively participate in the political/public life (Calhoun 2006a, 10). Today the transformations like retraction of public finances, shift in conceptualising autonomy, reorganisation of governance structures, and, not least, commodification of higher education are weakening the contribution of the university to the public sphere and thus restricting its contribution to the idea of public good as conceptualised above (Pusser 2006, 23).

10.4 The signs of gradual erosion of public good from the ideation of higher education and the advancing institutional discontinuity

The erosion of promoting the university as primarily the site of contribution to the public good in fact gave way to the contending definitions of higher education in relation to public good. Together with the general shifts in social forces in the 1970s and 1980s (see Chapter 11.1), the meaning of public good has also been exposed to re-definition and adjustment to the transforming historical structures. This also implied the relationship between higher education and the public good.

The contemporary discourse on public good often tends to be expressed in terms of tangible private and public benefits. Methodological individualism, business models and market ideology have together limited the recognition of the public good in higher education (Marginson 2013, 4). The massive production of research on public good, especially policy literature in economics, has framed the debate through cost-benefit approaches to production in higher education and to (neo) classical economic definitions of public goods (Marginson 2013, 4; Pusser 2006, 12).

Thus, the think tanks and commissioned research swiftly followed the necessity to legitimise the materialisation of policy ideas whereby the costs for higher education are partly transferred to private sources, notably individuals (See Chapter 8.1). The hunt for private resources matched perfectly with the grand idea of *post-modern market economists* whereby state would retreat from financing public services and whereby higher education would become a self-sufficient, marketable service and eventually a lucrative business (See next Chapter). Universities themselves have come to emphasise both the extent to which they deliver private goods and the extent to which the public goods they offer are economic in nature, i.e. in terms of new technology, human resource and the contribution to local industries (Calhoun 2006a, 12).

One of the recently conceptualised dimensions of public good in higher education is that of the global public good, first discussed by Marginson 2007[91]. Global public goods range from capacity building in developing nations to the inadvertent fostering of global cosmopolitanism in education export markets (Marginson 2013, 12). This conceptualisation sums up in a new

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[91] Referred to in Marginson 2013.

category the phenomena and trends that I discussed and presented in this dissertation and sheds light on the inter-university cooperation and competition in the global hierarchy of prestige from an integrated perspective. The integrated global view of higher education contribution to the public good reveals also its concentration in the regions/nations where higher education is more reputable (Marginson 2013, 13). The market and the supporting mechanisms are creating the assymetries in globalising higher education (Robertson 2009b). One can attribute the asymetries also to a growing impact of rankings (see Chapter 8.3.3 and 11.3). The reconfiguration and the geographical locus of hegemonic power appear as one of the outstanding features of global public good associated with knowledge and originating in higher education.

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But before coming to the global structuring of higher education and the related global asymmetries in allocating knowledge as a global public good, I presented the trends and the European and global shifts that are in an upswing and that crucially determine the continuity and change in the above presented institutionalised ideations, roles and functions of higher education. In other words, if this chapter presented where we were, the next is embarking on theorising about where we are going.

11. The new paradigm on the rise: Higher education as a Commodity and lucrative industry

n the Part II I interpreted several data collected on the field and developed the argument on the emerging ideation of higher education as a lucrative service - an industry on the global markets. This was interpreted as distinctive from the also salient ideation of higher education as an instrument for boosting economic competitiveness (see especially Chapters 4, 7, 8.3 and 9). In this chapter I brought up the larger picture of dynamism within social relations and thereby contributing to the contextualization and understanding of the material impact of these trends. In order to understand better the ideational dimension of the discussed phenomenon of trade in higher education I analysed and interpreted the broader social, political and economic context.

The extension of discursive institutionalism with the critical theory was particularly helpful in this exercise.

11.1 The reconfiguration of Social forces and the emerging historical structures

In Europe the aftermath of World War II saw a complex transition between several layers of ideas accompanied by the intense dynamism in the configuration of social forces. The conflicts of the early 20th century left a significant footprint on the programmatic and policy levels. The ideas that defined problems revolved around the inequalities that emerged in the industrial modern age throughout the 19th century and later. Egalitarian ideas rose all around Europe, but they were manifested differently on different sides of the iron curtain, while a third distinctive version arose in the socialist Yugoslavia.

The economic policy of the West[92] predominantly relied on Keynesian economic theory and the international regimes of regulation, such as Bretton Woods institutions. The then new ideational platform of the West was constructed mainly on social democratic views of egalitarian redistribution of wealth and the welfare liberal model of state (Gill 2003a, 62). The overarching idea of welfare state was powered by the lessons learned from the times of increasing inequalities and asymmetric distribution of wealth, power and resources between the competing economic formations (empires or states). The egalitarian values were closely intertwined with the long lasting liberal project of democratic citizenship which included also enlightenment of people through open and state provided education (Scott 1993, 22).[93]

However, the egalitarian and welfare state ideas were the product of the same period as the grand ideas of the nation state, national emancipation, class emancipation, progress of humanity and other grand narratives of the 19th century. The profound changes in economic and social relations brought to a deeper reconfiguration of social forces. Jean Francois Lyotard marked the period at the end of the reconstruction of Europe (late 1950s) as the beginning of an era of transition and profound change of society and culture in the Western world. Societies entered

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[92] In this dissertation I predominantly follow the social and political developments in the Western world, which stands for the liberal democratic institutional arrangements and market based economies mainly (but not only) situated on the Northern Atlantic rim.
[93] The post-world war II period and the pertaining historical structures and institutions were dealt with in Chapter 10.

the post-industrial age and cultures the postmodern age (Lyotard 1984, 3). The emerging economic discourses have progressively been infused with the promotion of the market supremacy, privatisation of the provision of public goods, emergence of international organisations with ideological agenda and, not least, resuscitation of the classical economics scholarship (Hill 2007, 108; Gill 2003a, 62). These processes sprung in the Western nation states. However, the transnational production and global economic exchange in conjunction with the defeat of the social, political and economic experiment east of the iron curtain facilitated the proliferation of such ideas beyond the Western world.

The transition to what Lyotard calls *postmodern condition* saw a gradual decline of the nation state and the rise of transnational scale of economic relations (Lyotard 1984, 5). The character of national elites has changed, as the entrepreneurial class has risen on the expense of the professional and public service elites (Scott 1998, 125). The shift from production to finance began to loosen the order based on national economic elites, thereby facilitating the emergence of transnational social forces. This has started to gradually replace the order based on post World War II international hegemonic stability (Gill 2003a, 63). The *Bretton Woods* order built on the idea of regulating/taming the emerging global capitalism, was replaced by the so called *Washington Consensus* denoting the policy recipe for European transitional countries and other "developing" countries based on free trade, deregulation, privatisation, balanced budgets and inflation taming (Nixon 2011, 2).

The policies of deregulation, growing financial sector and liberalisation allowed for the concentration of wealth and power in some economic areas and an increasing concentration of surpluses within small groups of society in urban areas and financial centres (Harvey 2005, 119).

Over time it is possible to observe national sovereignty gradually surrendering to the supremacy of the global market. The policy reforms that were not achievable within the national policy and political arenas, were rerouted to increasingly powerful international regimes and organisations such as WTO, OECD, IMF and EU. The liberalisation and deregulation was advocated by policy scripts. From the 1990s onwards, the so called Washington consensus, in the neoclassical conceptual framework, aimed to answer the global economic challenges with the policies based on privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation (Harvey 2005, 93). The global financial and monetary institutions/regimes progressively took over the role of consecrating and enduring the new ideational hegemony (Gill 2003a, 59).

The shifts reached also to the micro level of social fabric. The rise of political demands for individual rights and liberties in the 1960s and 1970s gradually merged with the idea of individualised society, where individuals and families would bear the responsibility for their health, education, housing and other services. This in many cases led (and is still leading) to increasing household debts, as well as to flourishing of insurance business and other lucrative services. The *welfare state model* where state is the overarching entity gave way to a model which presumes individuals to be rational actors and where the market is the supreme regulator in a postmodern individualistic and self-caring society (Gill 2003a, 54). The new model conceives polity as consisting of the individual first and the community second, with limited legitimacy for the state to place demands on the individual (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 7). The concerns for collective (general) interest are often considered oppressive to the individuals' freedom to choose. Social welfare provision has been gradually pushed to the market and the same is happening with institutions such as prisons, hospitals, research centres and universities (Harvey 2005, 160). Market has increasingly become the organisational and steering technique of governments. The government, however retain a *positive intervention role* in addition to being a supervisor - acting through management, auditing, accounting and similar governing techniques (Olssen and Peters 2005, 315).

11.1.1 Shifts in ideational hegemony on programmatic and philosophical levels

The new modality of governance comprises various solutions and is underpinned by a number of theoretical schools, conceptual approaches and philosophical assumptions (Olssen and Peters 2005, 314; Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 3).

In the 1980s the Western world witnessed the outset of the transition of the regulation from government to governance. The former stands for the state power on its own whereas the latter denominates the broader configuration of state and key elements of civil society, notably the private business, in creating policies and governing individuals and organisations (Harvey 2005, 77). The transformation aimed at organising a system so that the governance happens by itself, spontaneously, as result of inherent drivers for the agents (e.g. competition) and check and balances. In parallel the size of the government should be deflated. This self-regulatory system is underpinned by various theoretical schools, such as *Public Choice Theory*. The direct

management of the state is considered inefficient and is thus replaced by contract, outsourcing and measurement of delivery.

In his theorising of the emerging social and cultural condition and the related governance model, Jean François Lyotard devised the term *performativity*. The economic equation based on input and output became a dominant narrative (Lyotard 1984, 46), and *efficiency* became the imperative of the postmodern economistic discourses across the fields and disciplines of society. This general trend is epitomized by the idea of *New Public Management.* New public management became a totalising ideology of the governmentality, allowing governing with small government, and replacing the central regulation with market mechanisms and outcomes evaluation (Olssen and Peters 2005, 322). The ideas arising from New Public Management and Public Choice theory underpinned also the reform in higher education.

11.1.2 Shifts in configuration of social forces on the European scale: an emerging regional order

This chapter will not review the whole ideational transformation and the dynamics in social forces throughout the history of European integration. But in a nut shell: the aforementioned shifts in social forces and the formation of new economic and political elites resulted in a market-monetarist consensus in the 1980s and engaged the grand idea of a single market to re-launch the European integration (Apeldoorn 2002, 48). This course of action was elaborated by the single currency and the general trend towards gradual concentration of vast regulatory powers to the EU Commission and the European Court of Justice (Gill 2003a, 63, Chapter 9). EU became a political formation beyond and above the nation state, founded in normalised ideational framework where free trade and market freedoms are dominating integrative values. It is possible to talk about an emergent transnational, multi-level state–society complex and the contours of a transnational historical bloc (Apeldoorn 2002, 48).

Thus multi-dimensional processes have shaped the world in which the Europeanisation of higher education currently unfolds. Shifts in social forces are mutually constitutive and occur in an interplay between 1.ideas (liberal, market supremacy, and competitive world), 2.material relations (transnational economic and social relations, new distribution of wealth, shifts in production and new economic elites) and 3.institutions (dominance of market institutions, new rationalities of action, governance structures). In a larger, critical perspective of (neo)

Gramscian approach this can be viewed as the moment of change in historical structures (Cox 1981, 137).

11.1.3 Higher education as part of the large scale structural shifts

The shifts in ideas and social/material relations are indeed the contexts that crucially determine the position of higher education in modern European society. Changes in governance and the emergence of new and powerful imaginaries and ideas brought higher education to the centre of European public and policy attention (see Part II of this study). Indeed it is possible to discern tectonic shifts, decisively departing from the institutional framework presented in Chapter 10. The transformation of higher education is integral to the larger transformation of social forces, while university is reviewed in light of a new pact in the emerging European social and political order (Gornitzka et al. 2007, 184).

The rethinking, reorganising and refunding of university are processes of change in the larger configuration of institutions in which university is embedded (Olsen 2007, 25). It is precisely the changing nature of institutions that the discursive institutionalism is interested in. Crises lead to uncertainty and soften the otherwise rigid structures (Blyth 2011). The shifts described above are fundamental enough to represent the trigger moments for the new ideas transported by discourses to emerge and contest the established order of institutions.

The changes leading to the unstable institutional setting occur on the very fundament of the ideational construction of the social and cultural world. In 1979 Jean-François Lyotard identified this shift hypothesising about the postmodern condition in a post-industrial society where the grand narratives once upholding the reality and legitimising the truth gave way to disenchantment, scepticism and incredulity (Lyotard 1984). He discerned the large scale shift in the narratives legitimising knowledge: The narratives on *truth, moral dimension* and *emancipation of humanity* gave way to the discourse of *performativity* (ibid, 46). The financing of higher education is thus not seeking the truth, emancipation and realisation of ideals; but profits, productivity, power and subduing of the nature.

The desired goal becomes the optimal contribution of higher education to the best performativity of the social system. Accordingly it will have to create the skills that are inseparable to that system. The first kind are more specifically designed to tackle world

competition. They vary according to which "specialities" the nation-states ort major educational institutions can sell on the world market. […] Secondly, and still within the general hypothesis, higher learning will have to continue to supply the social system with the skills fulfilling society's own needs, which centre on maintaining its internal cohesion. [In the postmodern condition] *universities and the institutions of higher learning are called upon to create skills, and no longer ideals – so many doctors, so many teachers in a given discipline, so many engineers, so many administrators, etc.* (Lyotard 1984, 48).

One can easily interpret Lyotard's words as a prophecy, if one compares his hypothesis with the EU and Bologna discourses of today. These processes offer a comprehensive package of policy level ideas stemming from the same programmatic background. *Generic skills*, *employability*, *responsiveness* to the needs of society and the labour market are the notions that abound in the discursive interaction within the European political arena (see Chapters 4 and 8.1). On the other hand the second kind of skills correspond to the necessity for professionals that contribute to the productive technology and thereby assure competitiveness of the region (see Chapter 8.1 and theorisation in Chapter 12). Furthermore, the transformation is accompanied and galvanised by the increasing amount of administrative measures and solutions legitimised as guardians of "societal demands". Also on this point we can argue that Lyotard (1984, 49) was accurate in anticipating the trend of rising importance of the measuring of performance; especially quality assurance mechanisms, qualification frameworks and other instruments that mainly emphasise the output or outcomes of learning - not least the popular rankings.

Thus, the magnitude of transformation has reached paradigmatic proportions. Valuing university according to its direct output and performance changes its meaning. Namely, the more the institution becomes instrumental for achieving externally prescribed policy goals (economic, political, religious) the more it becomes a mechanical organisation, and the less it is able to fulfil broader social and cultural purposes (Zgaga 2009, 185).

11.1.4 Breaking the elitist higher education – a key endogenous preamble to the large scale transformation of the University

I have argued in several sections of this dissertation that massification and expansion of higher education are the material changes that cut deeply into the essence of higher education and that

in itself represent a powerful pressure for a reform of university. I also presented the underlying philosophical ideas and the spirit of time that underpinned the ideation of higher education as one of the key institutions for emancipation of underprivileged social groups (see Chapter 10).

Mass higher education endured as the accepted reality, and arguably represents the endogenous characteristic that significantly affected the dynamics of further transformation. The substantial increase of enrolments and the consequent change in the socio-economic structure of students (and with this their cultural capital) required a rethinking of organization, notably the large scale management of student numbers (Calhoun 2006a, 14; Becher and Trowler 2001, 14).

Parallel to the increase in enrolments, massification also resulted in expansion of the sector. Growing numbers of institutions also meant greater diversity within higher education; and disciplinary fragmentation. The latter does not necessarily mean specialisation, but often brought the interdisciplinary teaching orientation (Husen 1991, 183). Not least, massification brought along also a considerable increase of teaching staff with diversified status and contracts, which utterly changed the inner landscape of higher education, in particular the university (Becher and Trowler 2001, 17).

With massification also the relationship between higher education and elite formation changed. The old links between higher education and elite were inevitably diluted while attending higher education became the norm within broad social groupings (Scott 1998, 113). The channels of exclusivity elite reproduction moved elsewhere, albeit still present in the hierarchies of the universities (Calhoun 2006b, 12; Scott 1998, 125). These alternative routes of elite reproduction have in a later stage and up to date, been accentuated by internationalisation and increased transnational activities of universities. As Marginson (2006) argues, the hierarchical positioning became global, combining the attractiveness of countries (and regions) with attractiveness of universities (see Chapter 11.3.1).

11.1.5 Exogenous structural pressures on the university

With the decline of the nation state and the rise of global markets, the old formula of the university (in all its variations across the continent) lost traction and is exposed to the period of uncertainty and change (Zgaga 2009, 185). The rise of the entrepreneurial elites occurred parallel to the decline of the professional and public service elites (Scott 1998, 125). Habermas

and Blazek (1987, 12) list four main reasons for the gradual withdrawal of the ideal of *unity of knowledge*: the differentiation in the world of work, the rise of empirical sciences, growth of importance of science as the productive force in industry, and the differentiation between university and other types of higher education. Kerr (1987, 183) argued that the three greatest forces at work in the transformation of higher education were the demand for greater opportunity in the polity; the demand for higher competence in each advanced economy; and the demand for facilities for lifelong learning.

At the same time the shifts occurred in the ideational and institutional social forces, mainly manifested in new public philosophies on a just and prosperous system, and the changed role of higher education as a socially and culturally embedded institution. While in the 19th century the Western university was imagined as the central element of nation building and reproduction of state elites, the aftermath of the World War II viewed university as a socially emancipatory institution, and in the late 20th century it became imagined as central to achieving economic goals (Scott 1998, 110).

11.1.6 The re-contextualisation of *university autonomy* as part of the *New Public Management* programme

Perhaps one of the most visible and frequently used concepts in the reform discourse is the concept of *university autonomy*. This concept appears as crucial in most of the analysed policy processes and discursive interactions and to a great extend can be viewed as a central discursive element for the large shifts in the ideas and institutional aspects of higher education. It appeared as a key concept in a number of discursive regularities in the European higher education policy arena and political community. The discursive strategies in both communicative and coordinative discourses engage autonomy as a positive concept, as a value, and as legitimating of proposed policy ideas. It works as a permanent argumentative reference that seems to carry a high normative charge and can be used in various contexts serving different ideational directions (see Chapters 4, 7, 8).

The traditional conception of autonomy is linked to the deeply rooted normative elements such as academic principles and values – difficult to pinpoint, but yet part of the European academic tradition (see Chapter 10). University autonomy is closely linked to the inner practices, relations and strata of academic work. University as an institution has always been rigid and

conservative, but its ethos of enquiry and pursuit of truth has been radical in its creativity and advance. This apparent paradox was possible exactly because of academic independence and the autonomous status on the system level (Husen 1991, 174). Autonomy of the university stood for a sort of safe haven where research could be advanced without external pressures and where academics enjoy the individual scholarly freedom (Humboldt 1970, Rüegg 2002).

Autonomy of university was crucial also to the idea of university as an institution of the public sphere, where critical thought is generated and where the arguments, deliberation and critical stand towards the state and daily matters are articulated (Habermas and Blazek 1987, Marginson 2013, 10). This purpose is however challenged by many exogenous and endogenous pressures for transformation, and the subsequent change in the meaning of autonomy (Pusser 2006, 23).

Another attempt to grasp the complexity and deep socio-cultural embeddedness of the university was made by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He viewed university as a field whereby he accounted for the complexity and diversity in higher education, and the inherent tensions and alliances; including the inter-personal, inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional relations (Bourdieu 1988). From Bourdieu's perspective the autonomy of the university derives from the successful claim of members of a field that they do something distinctive and important, and that they maintain order within the field with internal rules and practices – in the case of universities this is mutual recognition and peer review (Calhoun 2006b, 11). This conceptualisation also allows us to view the relations and tensions between autonomous higher education and other fields such as market, business, or religion.

However deeply in the institutional setting the notion of autonomy was anchored, it was also doomed to change due to a combination of the above described external and internal forces. Namely, the traditional western notion of autonomy is also closely related to the relationship between the inner microcosm and the outer world; such as the authorities, general public or other institutions. On one hand the external attempts to change the inner world have been met with fierce resistance, which was sometimes seen as conservatism or even reactionism (Husen 1991, 174). On the other hand, the university as institution has also always had the ability to adapt to the changing social, political and cultural context (Rüegg 2002, 39).

In the new programmatic context, the academic (professional) autonomy is gradually replaced by managerial autonomy and centrally organised hierarchy externally liable to the evaluation and accreditation authorities. All this is part of the above presented programmatic platform of *New Public Management* (Olssen and Peters 2005). In this totalising governance idea, the

concept of autonomy of the university community – a guarantee for academic freedom - has been discursively reworked and re-contextualised into the autonomy of the senior management and senior administrative staff, engaged in a process of detachment of university from a tight state regulation and its entry into competitive world (Olssen and Peters 2005; Olsen and Maassen 2007; Gornitzka and Maassen 2000, 272).

11.2 The effect of changing historical structures: transformation of higher education in practice

The decline of the nation state and the rise of global markets heavily determined the institutional context in which the ideation of university has recently been modernised (Zgaga 2009, 185). The rise of market and corporate organisation logic in higher education can be described as a process of preparing universities to new "realities", but also to operate on the competitive (global) market by adopting commercial models of knowledge, skills, curriculum, finance, accounting, and management organisation (Levidow 2007, 238; Slaughter and Lesllie 1997; Kauppinen 2012; Newman and Couturier 2002). Thereby it gives rise to something that can be referred to as *transnational academic capitalism* (Slaughter and Leslie 1997).

Commodification of higher education

The macro and micro transformations of higher education presented in this sub-chapter are often referred to as *commodification* of higher education. The concept is complex and might be misleading if not defined properly beforehand.

The notion of commodity is used mainly to describe the deeper change in conceptualising higher education and to denote the profound shift in its discursive meaning[94]. Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) argue about the profound re-conceptualization of education with commodification as the central process. They define commodification in higher education as the transformation of educational process into a form that has an 'exchange' value, rather than intrinsic 'use' value, implying that education processes and Knowledge can be 'captured' and 'packaged' in order to be bought or sold under market conditions across national boundaries.

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[94] Amongst other uses, the term commodification can be traced back to the discussions on controversies of Marxist thoughts that took place in the 1970s, but the history of this concepts is deemed less relevant for the scope and purpose of this study.

The academic practices associated with higher education institutions have increasingly been valued in terms of their ability to be translated into money (Nixon 2011, 10). The educational relationship itself is transformed into a relationship that is dependent on the market transaction of the commodity, whereby the lecturer becomes a commodity 'producer' and the student becomes a commodity 'consumer' (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005, 40). This profound change is of central importance to the argument of this study.

Thus, when universities are put on the track of becoming industry-like entities and engage in transnational business activities, this does not only mean additional income and diversified financing scheme, but it alters social relations, generates new agency, and affects the regulatory structures. Once all this is put in motion, the process becomes complex and irreversible, and engulfs the entire social structure. Thus, on the conceptual level it easy to interpret a period of considerable shift in material relations that affect also the ideation and institutional framework of higher education.

11.2.1. Macro level shifts and practices: The University as a lucrative business and export industry on a global scale

The trend of commodification and market oriented reforms in higher education can be observed in various practices. In this sub-chapter I briefly present the material relations and institutional practices often identified in commodified higher education systems.

The trends of understanding and (re)regulating higher education as a competitive service industry, can be observed all across the European continent, but not at the same pace and not always in a decisive and comprehensive manner. For example the Nordic states are deemed to be the countries where market principles in higher education are only epiphenomena, while the core of the system remains loyal to the Nordic welfare state model (Gornitzka and Maassen 2014; Brown 2011, 20). However, also in these countries the operational context and funding of higher education institutions is changing. In Sweden the tuition fees for non EU students have been introduced, while the same is discussed in Finland.

Another example is the Netherlands – a case of a far reaching transformation of universities in the direction of managerial structures, private financing sources and competition based regulation. The market oriented reforms brought the Dutch system second only to the UK in

this respect. The latter can be considered as the most market driven higher education system in Europe (Brown 2011, 17).

The UK can be, without hesitation, characterised as the European champion in reorganising the universities into competitive entities. The transformation and success of British universities on global scale, has been coupled with the economic strategy that relies on the expansion of the higher education export business. But this process is neither unique and nor the first of its kind. The transnational higher education in the form of students moving to the institution or institutions opening branch campuses (or online services) has been growing for many decades (Knight 2003). The pioneers in this were the USA, Australia and New Zealand (Robertson 2010b; Roberts 1998). The UK promptly followed the trend and set up its own strategy in 1997, evolving through the 2000s and bringing UK (with 15% of students paying full-fees) as a top higher education exporter; second only to Australia with 20% (OECD 2009, 309). New exporters of higher education such as Singapore, China and Malaysia have also emerged, adding to the push for the open global markets in higher education (Robertson 2010a, 197). In parallel to the aggressive strategy of generating income by attracting foreign students resulted also in the establishment of offshore operations, e.g. branch campuses where UK is among the top exporters (Becker 2009).

The export and income generating strategies brought about the next stage – the establishment of the first for-profit higher education provider in the UK (Robertson 2010c, 25). The money involved in all these activities is difficult to calculate, but the fact that in 2011-12 the international students generated a total income of £10.2 billion in living expenses and tuition fees[95] , can give a hint that transnational higher education industry turns over significant sums.

The governments paving the way to export of education services through international trade regimes

Higher education figures among the services that have been widely debated within the global initiatives to liberalise trade in services. Since the 1990s, the governments of education exporting countries have sought to advance their interests in exporting educational services within the WTO framework. Thereby they would create durable conditions for trade in educational services and remove barriers for entry into national higher education 'markets'. Locking the rules of transnational trade in a trade agreement would contribute considerably to

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[95] http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/overseas-students-targeted-in-new-export-strategy/2006056.article (6.12.2013)

stability of the prospective trade in services and would therefore be attractive for the export industry (Robertson 2010b, 13). More precisely, one of the WTO's three pillars is dedicated to trade in services - the agreement under which negotiations on liberalisation take place is called the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The GATS related process leads states to give up some of their regulatory competencies in favour of market and WTO bodies (Robertson 2003; Robertson and Verger 2008; Hackl 2002).

In the early 2000s GATS negotiations triggered negative reactions in civil society, grass roots movements, education trade unions and other actor in higher education, while the parties interested in liberalising trade in education were less vocal in publically displaying their position (Knight 2003). This tension and conflict creeped also into the political arena of the European higher education area (see Chapters 7 and 9).

In the surging transnational higher education business and the pertaining shifts in economic relations on the transactional scale, the GATS exemplifies a political initiative that serves the powerful actors in creating favourable settings for business expansion (Robertson 2003). Namely, in principle the GATS fixes the liberalisation rules beyond the reach of governments − it passes some of the regulation competences to the WTO, which works in favour of advancing the (private) transnational services provision (Scherrer 2005, Hill 2007).

The tendencies of expanding trade in education identified in the GATS case are not isolated. A similar discursive interaction occurred within the EU in the occasion of adoption of the Directive on services. The implication of this policy tool for the steering and regulation of higher education was presented in Chapter 9. Both can be taken as examples of the erosion of the power of democratic authorities to regulate education replaced by growing influence of global market forces and the international/global trade regimes conceptualised as new constitutionalism.

11.2.2 The micro level shifts and practices: the implications of commodification of higher education for the social relations within the universities

In this sub-chapter the implication of the market ideation at the micro level are examined. Such detailed overview of shifts at the micro level contribute to a better understanding of the

magnitude and scope of the commodification of higher education, and illuminate what happens to the practice of higher education as the macro level ideation described above materializes.

The rise of the market strategies in higher education and the implication for the university micro cosmos

The market oriented transformation did not only allow the UK universities to become a lucrative export industry but also brought about a general transformation of the relations between university, students, government and society at large (Gibbs 2011). It is therefore the case of English universities that in relation to the rest of Europe represent the most advanced case of commodification. In addition, the UK case of micro transformation as consequence of market oriented reforms is likely to be one of the best explored cases of this kind.

The media and initiatives such as league tables contributed to the shifts in perceptions of the universities (Brown 2011; Williams 2011). Universities' mission statements are dominated by marketing language, and use words that reflect the discursive construction of the university identity and the identity of their students and graduates according to the desired corporate image (Sauntson and Morrish, 2011, 82). The university leaders see commercial branding as an activity of strategic importance. This impacts the design and content of the websites, and results in massive production of promotion material and other forms of selling the "service", as universities spend increasing amounts of resources on this activity (Chapleo 2011, 111). Universities employ advertising and public relations agencies to ensure the positive image of themselves and their 'products' (Olssen and Peters 2005, 328).

Except for few established universities who can enjoy more financial security due to their endowments, the marketization of higher education has utterly changed the operational context of universities. This pushed them to fundamentally review what it means to be a university and what sort of university they might wish to be within the constraints of the unavoidable market oriented strategy (Foskett 2011, 36).

The altered teaching and learning relationships and educational experience

Furedi (2011, 4, 5) draws a parallel between the modern phenomena related to the deep ideational and material changes in perceiving higher education to the writings of some thinkers from the distant past. The debate about treating students as customers can be traced as far back as the ancient Greece. Socrates expressed his criticism of Sophist philosopher teachers, who charged money for their services. In his view the payment for teaching compromised the

relationship between teacher and student. Plato continued on this line, warning that once teaching becomes subordinated to an agenda that is external to itself, it will become distracted from maintaining its integrity; and that the pressure to accommodate and compromise will prevail. In the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill echoed Socrates and Plato, and noted that paid teachers attain their purposes not by making people wiser or better; but by conforming to their opinions, pandering to their desires, and making them better pleased with themselves and with their errors and vices.

The market transformation of education inexorably affected the pedagogical relations and the attitude of students towards the learning process (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005; Barnett 2011; Marinfe 2011; Nordensvard 2011). The market oriented trends cut deep into the micro-level of relationships of teaching and learning, utterly altering the nature of higher education. In other words, the educational relationship itself is transformed into a relationship that is dependent on the market transaction of the commodity, thereby disaggregating the pedagogical relationship (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005, 40).

Various concepts and metaphors are used in the discourses pertaining to these new micro relations. *Student as consumer* is perhaps the most frequent and general conceptualisation. It implies a passive student purchasing the ready-made product/service from the provider who holds a monopoly of power (Barnett 2011, 43). The concept of consumer is used both in the context of a consumption relationship based on service utilisation (Maringe 2011, 147); and in the context of the transformation of pedagogical dialectical relationship between *teacher* and *student* into one between *producer* and *consumer* (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005, 47). Consumer as a metaphor is linked to the personal utilisation or instrumentalisation of higher education in various ways.

Nordesvard (2011, 160) distinguishes three types of consumer metaphors. The first refers to knowledge as a utility for career and success in the world of work. The second refers to the reduction of education to the mere credential or degree, whereby the student aims at improving his CV and raising his educational status. The third type views student as purchasing a fun period of a particular stage in life. The consumer metaphor is embedded in the consumer culture, and enhanced by the tuition fee policy. Some authors view consumer culture in higher education as exploiting the desires and imagination of young people and their parents, where the universities enact the marketing strategies to sell idealised images and lifestyles (Haywood et al. 2011, 193).

The metaphor of student as *customer,* in contrast with student as *consumer*, plays a more active role in the market relationship. In the process where universities compete for fee paying students, the latter have been accordingly constructed as customers who bear resources, and are encouraged to carefully select the institution where to purchase the service (Barnett 2011, 44). This process implies also the introduction of student satisfaction surveys and the belief that paying individuals will demand higher quality, and thereby boost the performance of the universities (Maringe 2011, 146). The customer metaphor implies students as managers, who invest in their 'human capital' in order to improve their life chances. Hence they are expected to actively pursue the logic of consequence and calculus to maximise their benefits through obtaining knowledge and the educational degree (Nordensvard 2011, 159).

Paying a tuition fee is the key element in both customer and consumer ideations (and self-perceptions) of students. It creates the exchange or the purchase relationship; and therefore potentially causes the asymmetry in the pedagogical relationship (Maringe 2011; Barnett 2011; Nordensvard 2011). The student's experience of knowledge is altered, if he has to buy it. This has a number of implications for equality, stratification, and social reproduction. (Barnett 2011, 46). In a customer-centred approach, the disinterested inquiry and respect for the integrity of the subject content compete with increasing pressures to simplify education courses, and demonstrate their relevance for the labour market (Olssen and Peters 2005, 326). The customer satisfaction surveys in higher education are based on reductionist assumptions: While students can give an immediate feedback on teachers, libraries, facilities, best starting time for the lectures, and similar; they tend to know much less about good instruction and assessment techniques, and available resources (Maringe 2011, 148). Reacting on the 'customer' complaints or negative feedback, might lead to ill-informed steps to gain short term customer satisfaction, but lead to long-term detrimental effects in education. A paying student is prone to position himself as a customer, who passively demands the service provider to 'do its job'. Thereby the essential elements of education – the active will and commitment to learn, and due diligence in the pursuit of successful acquisition of knowledge and skills – are ignored (Barnett 2011, 43; Maringe 2011, 149). Consequently, the customer expectations might create nervousness (or reluctance) on the part of the institution to award poor grades, or to fail a student; thereby enticing the university to lower its educational standards (Barnett 2011, 43). In other words, education requires the learners' effort and the graduate satisfaction may only show with considerable delay.

After this, I can conclude that it is perhaps not the computerised data that are marking the "end of professor" as per Lyotard's prophecy (Lyotard 1984, 53); but the profound changes in social relations within the university. The commodified relations reduce the student experience to *customer* or even *consumer*, while the professor has to abide by the rules of customer satisfaction, and the (short term) measurements of efficiency and performance. The implications of these new roles and the pertaining ideations (constructions), expectations and modes of performing educational duties; transform the nature of post-modern teachers beyond comparison with that of the modernist times.

11.3 The global structuration of higher education and the contours of the new, transnational order in higher education

One of the significant symptoms of the emerging hegemonic ideation of higher education, is the growing popularity and power of the ranking of universities. In Chapter 8.3 it was presented as a key mechanism in exerting power over the global structuration of higher education. It reflects the transnational social relations, the growing business of transitional higher education, and the borderless structures in which higher education is ideated. The communicative action following the presentation of the U-Multirank project, illustrates the high level of importance attributed to ranking as an instrument of attributing value to universities, and thereby for positioning them on the global higher education market.

11.3.1 Ranking – a popular symbolic tool for shaping and structuring the reality

Renowned authors in higher education research agree, that rankings and league tables tend to norm higher education into a single space of essentially homogeneous institutions, unifying heterogeneous landscape into a uniform referential scale; thereby contributing to the process of defining a new reality in the field of higher education (Marginson 2006; Marginson and van der Wende 2007; Hazelkorn 2008; Kauppi and Erkkilä 2011).

The state of higher education depends on the information that is produced about it; and if the ranking tables themselves are perceived as relevant, they undoubtedly shape the perception of 'good and bad' in higher education (Hazelkorn 2008, 202). Therefore, rankings can be regarded as a powerful symbolic tool bringing about the consensus over major characteristics of reality;

and thereby creating/maintaining structures and reproducing power relations (Kauppi and Erkkilä 2011, 316). Each ranking creates its own ideation of higher education; thereby defining the purposes, outputs and values of higher education, and interpreting higher education to the interested public and society at large (Marginson 2006,1).

In the era of vertical stratification of higher education institutions, the reputation of a university has become its most important capital. Research universities have seized a sort of monopoly in attractiveness. Their reputation translates as prestige, and offers symbolic capital to graduates (Calhoun 2006b, 32). In this process, rankings consecrate or enhance the existing hierarchies. The league tables place new value to prestige and elite status; thereby enhancing or boosting the reputation of existing elite, and further marginalising the rest of the higher education institutions (Hazelkorn 2008, 211).

Rankings have grown popular also due to the mass nature of modern higher education in the Western world and the rapidly expanding higher education in the rest of the world. The share of society interested in higher education has become larger than ever since a growing number of families enrolled their children in tertiary level studies. In addition, with the human capital theories and Knowledge economy policy imaginaries the higher education has become more politicised than ever. In these circumstances the global rankings offers an appealing insight into the maze of universities. Thus, a sort of organic attractiveness has given a decisive impetus to the popularity of rankings across the globe (Marginson 2006, 1).

Rankings inverting the values and determining the policies

In order to perform on the global scale, the universities are reshaped, merged, and internally reformed. Universities themselves perceive rankings as strategically relevant, and shape their strategies in accordance with the ranking criteria (Hazelkorn 2008, 196). The externally set criteria, standards, definitions and classifications are generating comparative pressures that are substantially impacting national policies and institutional strategies (Marginson 2006; Marginson 2012; Hazelkorn and Ryan 2013). Instead of universities fulfilling the aims and purposes attributed by the society, they are maximising their efforts to pursue goals that are approximating the very criteria set out by ranking tables.

In this context the discourse of excellence can be interpreted as a communicative platform of confluence of two major ideational streams in European policy arena. Namely, excellence became the discursive regularity denoting both the commodity that can be bought and sold (Nixon 2011, 11), and the basic guarantee for the materialisation of the cognitive idea on knowledge economy. In this way ranking is endangering cultural and scientific diversity and depleting the public good nature of higher education in its micro cultural setting (Marginson 2006, 4).

Towards the global structuration of higher education

Ranking of universities as an outstanding phenomenon has considerably affected the transnational higher education business and stirred up heated debates in the national environments (Hazelkorn 2012). Because of the close link between rankings and reputation, the rankings increasingly and heavily influence the university strategies and the student choice, thereby accelerating the race for the resources and reinforcing the emergent global market for higher education services (Hazelkorn 2008, 209). As more universities enter the field, the importance of 'Brand' and global rankings as brand indicators, are bound to increase (Robertson 2010a, 200).

The rankings have become a powerful instrument that globally shapes higher education, awarding the status to already reputable universities with significant track record in research, a criterion emphasised by most ranking lists. The changing material conditions (and economic relations) with the expansion of transnational business in higher education push forward the popularity and centrality of rankings in the higher education policy. In relation to these processes it is possible to observe the contours of a nascent *global structuration of higher education*.

The global structuration of higher education is closely related reconfiguration of social forces the nascent transnational distribution of power. In Chapter 10 I presented the conceptualisation of global public good. The integrated global view of higher education as the principal contributor to the public good, also implies the concentration of this public good in the regions/nations where higher education is more reputable, and dominates the criteria for determining good higher education (Marginson 2013, 13). This bias and uneven concentration of public good becomes ever more consecrated and aggravated by the global rankings; and thereby the locus of global power and the tension between centres and peripheries.

Ranking is thus deeply embedded in a nascent global space of higher education and underlying structures, but at the same time, it also creates, reproduces and strengthens these structures (Kauppi and Erkkilä 2011:315). This dialectic relationship between global rankings and the increasingly globalised structuration of higher education offers an opportunity to conceptualise the transnational order and emerging historical structures for the ideation of higher education, presented next.

11.3.2 The power of ideas and the ideas of power – the new constitutional order for higher education

This section is dedicated to the conceptualisations and theorisation of the findings that indicate the tendency shifting of the some regulation and -binding or non-binding- competence over higher education from national to transnational level. Following the critical theory (chapter 2.5); the policies, and related institutional background changes and ideational directions, are contextualised in the larger picture and interpreted as integral to the shifts in social forces.

Ravinet (2008) and Hartmann (2008), each from a distinctive perspective, argue that the Bologna Process is acquiring a quasi-legal, rather than a voluntary character, both in terms of technical arrangements and in terms of establishing a supreme authority in directing the higher education reforms. The findings of this study do not contradict these arguments. Quite the opposite, the field enquiry, the collected data, the interpretations and conceptualisations indicate an ongoing change in historical structures whereby transnational level tends to gain some power over national political formations (in small steps). Yet this shift is not limited to the Bologna Process. This has brought about the emerging global structuration of higher education and the expanding economic activity of the universities on the global market in education services.

In Chapter 7 it was the communicative action within the Bologna policy/coordinative sphere that revealed a global trend towards a supranational deregulation of trade in education services within the WTO GATS framework. In Chapter 8.1, I presented the tendency of the EU higher education to pull the soft law and governance mechanisms, such as transparency tools and quality assurance towards supranational level. In Chapter 8.3, I presented a concrete policy idea that reflected the ideation of the necessity of EU to support its universities in their competitiveness within the emerging global structuration of higher education. The project called U-Multirank indicates the ideation of higher education as a borderless activity based on

institutions competing on the global scene. Perhaps the most indicative of the new constitutional trend were the cases presented in Chapter 9. The EU law and the activities of the EU Commission and the ECJ, show the emerging hegemony of free trade and market freedoms, which disregards the older, nationally embedded norms and values of education, as well as the cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent. These newly institutionalised ideas assume the constitutional role and are gradually materialised in the EU laws.

International relations, organisations, regimes and global shifts - towards a new constitutional order

The findings presented in the chapters of Part II suggest a necessity for an approach that transcends the dichotomy between intergovernmental and supranational in interpreting the evolution of ideas on higher education in contemporary Europe. The transnational economic structures and transnational social relations result in a transnational society and the pertaining social forces (Apeldoorn 2002).

Neo-Gramscian author Stephen Gill (2003) has used the term *new constitutionalism* to account for the power and the configuration of social forces in this transactional dimension. New constitutionalism denotes the phenomenon of strengthening of a limited but powerful state-like form, increasingly insulated from popular-democratic accountability. It gradually evolves into a direct governance regime/structure that cannot be overridden by national authorities. The reconfiguration of state forms serves the emerging transnational historical structures. The relationship between the political and the economic is redefined, so that the political agents' range of action is limited in favour of deregulated market model, free trade and entrepreneurial initiative (Gill 2003a, 66).

This process is also facilitated by a framework of international organisations such as WTO, EU, OECD, UNESCO, or international regimes and policy scripts such as the EU Lisbon strategy and the Bologna Process. They became in certain aspects a policy route for the materialisation of ideas that were rejected or politically inacceptable in domestic political arenas (Harvey 2005, 114). A variety of soft and hard regulatory mechanisms can be interpreted as representing the contours of an emerging supranational constitution-like frame, underpinning the new transnational historical structures and the pertaining hegemonic order (Apeldoorn 2002; Cox 1998; Cox 1999; Gill 2003a; Gill 2003b).

The tendency towards the construction of new constitutional order, can be discerned also in the field of higher education. It can be traced both on the global scale, e.g. in relation to WTO GATS rules on trade in services (Scherrer 2005), and on regional scale - in relation to the Europeanisation of higher education (Hartmann 2008). For this study, the regional dimension is more relevant, therefore I have described it in larger detail.

I interpreted a substantial trend of new constitutionalism in the European integration. One can view the EU as an inception of a political formation beyond and above the nation state, but neither a replica of the nation state nor a federation. It is being formed as a result of re-configuration of social forces into new historical structures transcending national idiosyncrasies (deliberate or not) and thereby constructs a new regional order based on transnational social relations, transnational civil society and global, market-based institutional setting (Apeldoorn 2002). In this sense , the levels of policy action (national, regional...) should not be viewed as separate but as dialectical relation between multiple scales of activity, in turn constitutive of Europe and European higher education sector (Robertson 2010c, 34; Dale 2009).

As such, it is expectable that the EU organically nurtures the tendencies for a normative and legal order to endure the emerging historical structures. The institutionalised ideas become the normative platform for a new regulatory regime that secures, protects and makes possible the further advance of these same hegemonic ideas and institutions. The authorities' intervention is seen as necessary for promoting more competitive markets, while avoiding or reducing collective provision of other services; especially those involved in spending and redistribution (Schmidt and Thatcher 2013, 11). This represents a shift away from the social democratic ideational hegemony of the post-World-War II Western Europe and the pertaining welfare-state institutional arrangements; and fundamentally changes the institutional context for the ideation of higher education.

Ideas embedded in the transnational sphere and the national institutional backgrounds

Along with acknowledging and conceptualising the EU ideational hegemony, it is necessary to answer the question on how the national governments were co-opted into the integration process based on such ideational platform, and why there was so little overt resistance to its advancing jurisdiction over higher education. It is easy to find examples for the reluctance of member states to abdicate competences in favour of the EU. The normative ideas of the diverse national

settings triggered resistance also in the case of the advancing competences of the EU in higher education. In the early 1990s the member states decisively rejected the EU Commission attempt to venture into the field of higher education (see Chapter 8.1).

The Bologna coordinative (policy) sphere shows how the European governments bring the discourse stemming from the domestic concerns, often resisting the economic instrumentalisation and commodification of higher education, up to the European level (see Chapters 4, 5 and 7). Hence, member states in certain occasions seem to be unlikely allies for the EU Commission taking over their competences. Nevertheless, the EU regulatory model accompanied with a strong ideational platform, gained the support - or at least acceptance - of the member states; and thereby made possible the advancing of hidden, but effective new constitutional forms. How come?

The answer can be found in several points of this dissertation, and theorised with the configuration of social forces in this particular historical moment and discerned in the intense policy and political action with the distinctive logic of communication in the European policy arena:

Firstly, the slowly fading relevance of the national institutional backgrounds can be linked to the transnational modes of production and social relations. This fostered the formation of a powerful transnational social group. One can interpret that the national elites have been progressively melting into a single transnational elite (power bloc), on the top of which we find the economic elite (owners of large economic assets, executives, financial elite) supported by political elite (national and EU executive powers) (Apeldoorn 2002, 48). Thereby the ground is paved for a transnational ideational consensus – the national elites with the previously diverse institutional context tend to converge towards a single elite mind. Accordingly the dynamics between social forces take place in a transnational setting: the EU state-society complex. In the case of higher education, the power of transnational mechanisms emerges when the issue at stake is transnational provision of higher education. The EU and the global mechanisms have gradually opened the way for transactional education market, where the lucrative business of commodified higher education can blossom. The advancing of services market deregulation is not performed by the authorities responsible for education, but by the ones responsible for the market.

Secondly, the techniques and sophistication of the communicative and coordinative strategies enable the penetrability of the strong policy machinery. The persuasiveness of the communicative discourse becomes effective, while the cognitive ideas that it carries, rapidly become normative, and integral to a widely accepted common sense (see Chapters 8.1 and 8.2). In this dynamic, the powerful groups seek to establish consensus. Using their background ideational and foreground discursive abilities, the agents normalise the cognitive ideas, until those penetrate and melt into the national institutional settings. In the case of the EU, and to a considerable extent also the Bologna Process; higher education has been subject to a powerful political initiative that aimed at bringing order into a maze of policy ideas, by articulating it through the programmatic idea of *competitive knowledge economy* (see Chapter 12).

Thirdly, the national elites themselves to a certain extent subscribe to the emerging transnational ideas, and are thus motivated to change the higher education sector in accordance with the programmatic ideas generated or articulated in the transnational policy arena. Generally the EU integration processes, with their ambiguous policy texts, gradualism, flexibility, and the seemingly non-binding nature of the provisions, seem inert and voluntary. At the same time, they fuel a powerful argument for "complying with Europe or lagging behind". They offer a pretext for introducing unpopular reforms, and considerably contribute to surmounting or bypassing potential domestic resistance to reforms that are deemed as essential solutions to domestic problems (Thatcher 2013, 186). The latter has been one of the principal sparks igniting the Bologna Process (Ravinet 2005). What initially seemed a voluntary participation of member states, was gradually transformed into monitored coordination, whereby the signatory countries felt obliged by their commitment to the Bologna Process and its follow-up structures (Ravinet 2008). In addition, the humanist notion of academic freedom subsided to the ideas on output oriented supervision and evaluation.

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In this chapter, I have concluded that the duality and two levels of dominant ideations of higher education on the European scale seemingly replace the traditional western European notion of the purposes of higher education. While the economic imaginary of knowledge economy runs on the programmatic plane, representing the answer to the ideated problems of the region, the commodification of higher education runs on a much more basic level. It profoundly transforms the essence and nature of higher education in relation to what it has represented in the former historical configuration of social forces (see also Chapters 10, 11.1 and 11.2).

12. *Knowledge economy* – making programmatic sense of cognitive ideas on the way to their normalisation

I kept crossing the powerful rationale of knowledge economy throughout the course of my research and in many forms and contexts. It marked one of the three ideational streams discerned in the discourses of the Bologna Process, the EU. At this point of the dissertation it is safe to say that the notion of knowledge economy and the idea of the Europe of knowledge crucially determined the broader ideational content of coordinative discourse on higher education in the European policy sphere. In order to interpret the impact it has on the ideations of roles and functions of higher education it is necessary to dig to the origins of it.

12.1 Knowledge at the centre of modern economies

At several points in this dissertation I refer to the knowledge economy as the representation of a programmatic level of ideas and an ideational set of social forces. These ideational constructions are changing through time, but do not spring out of a vacuum and are not random. Assuming that at the base of this powerful discursive activity there is a particular configuration of social forces, it makes sense to compare the substantive content of ideas with the material relations in modern Western and global economic trends. Namely, as powerful ideational phenomenon, the knowledge economy must have some significant correspondence to real material interdependencies in the existing economy or in relations between economic and extra-economic activities (Jessop 2008, Rebertson 2005).

Before moving on I nevertheless again stress the discursive nature and the programmatic ideational level of the knowledge economy notion. It is a prevailing element supporting a discursive strategy for the construction of the problem. In this sense Jessop (2008) argues that the increasingly normalised idea of knowledge as production factor and knowledge based economy as a hegemonic self-description of today's economy is in fact a misrepresentation that understates the extent to which every economy is a knowledge based economy. Every economy was to a certain extent a knowledge based economy, but not every economy was named as such

(Jessop 2008, 25). There is something more to the knowledge in our modern western economy and society that makes it so central in the dominant policy discourse.

In a broader theoretical perspective, the increased discursive presence of knowledge in the western economic order can be closely connected to the emergence of the grand narrative of performance (see Chapter 11.1.1). In his report on knowledge from 1979, Jean Francois Lyotard dated the genesis of performativity as the legitimising discourse of knowledge back to the first industrial revolution at the end of eighteenth century when technology was connected to wealth as its generator and vice versa; there was no technology without wealth. Thus technical apparatus required investment, but in return it optimised the efficiency of the task to which it was applied – in other words it improves performance and generates more surplus value. This equation, according to Lyotard, explains the motives behind the advance of technology and the emergence of performativity discourse:

> *It was more the desire for wealth than the desire for knowledge that initially forced upon technology the imperative of performance improvement and product realisation. The "organic" connection between technology and profit preceded its union with science. Technology became important to contemporary knowledge only through the mediation of a generalised spirit of performativity* (Lyotard 1984, 45).

Since the discourse of performativity has only grown its presence in legitimating knowledge, although with significant oscillations and ideational characteristics. In the nineteenth century the legitimation of knowledge underwent significant changes on the philosophical level, absorbed by the liberal humanist imaginaries, thereby becoming part of the grand narratives of modernity (see Chapter 10.2.1). Western modernity, with its mode of an organising economy was subject to profound changes and thus a reconfiguration of social forces. The period after the reconstruction of Europe (in the late 1950s) is marked with the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial Western society. Following that period knowledge has become the principle force of production along with the fading of the nation state and the rise of the transnational scale of economic and social relations. This affected the structure of the work force in those countries and strengthened the pre-eminence of science in the arsenal of productive capacities of the nation states (Lyotard 1984, 5).

There can be little doubt that the role of knowledge in the post-modern industry has increased its role since the time Lyorard wrote his famous report on knowledge (Nokkala 2007). The modes and geographical distribution of production transformed in a way that encouraged the

perception of knowledge as an increasingly important form of global capital which in turn brought knowledge production into a closer relationship (and new coalition) with a broad range of industries (Olssen and Peters 2005, 331). Generating skilled labour and useful knowledge became considered as crucial for modern forms of production (Hill 2007, 110). The ever more institutionalised ideation of knowledge as capital lead to various forms of what some authors refer to as 'knowledge capitalism' (Olssen and Peters 2005) denoting knowledge at the centre of global economic activity.

The knowledge based economy paradigm is not only the consequence of the increased role of knowledge in the modern industry. The considerable contribution to the proliferation and normalisation of discourses and ideas developed around the ideated centrality of knowledge for modern economies can be attributed to the void that the post-world-war II economic order had left behind when it started to lose its hegemonic status. The latter occurred in the context of a number of crises that were not only limited to the policy realm but triggered larger scale social processes (Amaral and Neave 2009; Jessop 2008, 28). According to Blyth (2011) these circumstances represent the trigger moments for ideational contestation, and open the doors for the emergence and relevance of particular new ideas. Ideas are therefore both a stabilizing factor but also have transformative potential in situations of such extraordinary uncertainty.

12.2 Knowledge economy and knowledge society

Before engaging in further conceptualisation it is necessary to clarify the use of various terms and concepts. To start with, I borrowed Jessop's distinction between theoretical and policy paradigms. The theoretical realm knows both knowledge economy and knowledge society concepts:

> *Each of these two concepts is associated with a broader set of cognate concepts that produce distinctive types of imaginary. The former considers knowledge in terms of factors of production, intellectual property, the skills based economy, national systems of innovation, the knowledge base, the knowledge driven economy, knowledge management, knowledge transfer, the learning economy, the learning organisation, the learning region … The latter sees it in terms of collective social resource, the intellectual commons, the division of manual and mental labour, technical and organic intellectuals, the*

information society, post-industrial society, lifelong learning, the learning society (Jessop 2008, 18).

These two theoretical concepts and their multi-face discursive appearance are bound to different disciplines and bent according to the theoretical and disciplinary context in which they are engaged in the discourse. Hence it is expected that there will be a broad range of definitions of knowledge society and knowledge economy. However, on their way to the policy world the theoretical paradigms are heavily exposed to alterations and distortion. Theoretical paradigms preceding policy paradigms possess more sophisticated and rigorous evaluation of intellectual underpinnings of their conceptual frameworks, whereas the policy paradigm is cleaned from ambiguities and complex considerations, often down to reductionist technocratic discourse (Jessop 2008, 19).

Inspired by Michael Peters, Jessop (2008) argues that in the policy realm, *knowledge (based) society* and *knowledge (based) economy* appear as twin concepts displaying similar characteristics. In the policy discourse both concepts are often engaged as synonyms and devised to anchor policy and programmatic scripts for social and economic policy action. The discourse of knowledge society and knowledge economy is characterised by the attempt to describe society or economy in terms of dominant axial principle from which other societal or economic trends can be inferred. They are empirically underdetermined and operate like performative ideologies with the constitutive effects at the level of public policies (Jessop 2008, 20).

In terms of discursive institutionalism the two concepts construct a programmatic ideational framework within which the problems are defined and policy solutions proposed. Hence, they determine a cognitive ideational process and frame the discourse that communicates these ideas in policy and political arenas and thereby make some ideas prevailing over the others. The same process might lead towards a gradual normalisation or institutionalisation of cognitive ideas. In this dissertation I studied the European policy realm and found the two concepts tend to be devised to denote the same meaning and are two discursive faces of the same ideational content.

In the text of the dissertation I predominantly use the term knowledge economy to refer to the concepts and discourses presented in this chapter.

12.3 Articulation, promotion and perpetuation of the idea

Considering that knowledge became central to the ideas in the emerging historical structure, the ideational constructions involving knowledge intensified. The idea of knowledge as the booster of economic growth needed public support in order to normalise the cognitive ideas for the reforms in higher education. This is something that can be provided by the programmatic ideas. Namely, the programmatic ideas constitute a comprehensive concept of control and thereby are supposed to serve precisely this purpose. They create the platform for a particular way of understanding, interpreting and constructing a complex reality and thereby defining the problems in order to set the course for determined policy solutions (Mehta 2011, 33). Thus, programmatic ideas and the pertaining policy scripts worked in the direction of an institutionalisation of strategic orientations generated by the leading social groups in a form of integrated and overarching political programmes with the aim of unifying divergent views, identities, interests (Apeldoorn 2002, 30). Thereby they soften and change the old institutional order and construct consent for the emerging hegemony.

From this perspective the *knowledge economy* denominates the imaginary in which problems are formulated and the competitiveness rationale proposed as the guiding target (Shahjahan and Torres 2013, 611). It can be interpreted as the key policy concept in the ideological articulation of different partial world views and theories in a single discourse or hegemonic imaginary. In the view of gaining consent, the perceived interests of a great part of society are incorporated in the hegemonic discourse, in this case the discourse of knowledge economy. The policies pertaining to the knowledge society become appropriate (obvious) and encounter little resistance. These processes are usually facilitated by international organisations and regimes. In this case of knowledge economy it is possible to attribute this role to the OECD and World Bank and also to regional integrations such as the EU and ASEAN.

Emerging theories that formed the dominant thought in economics were at some point articulated in various cognitive ideational packages. The policy concept of the knowledge economy can be taken as one of the more outstanding exemplars. The OECD in the 1990s was among the discursive venues that first intensively elaborated and articulated into communicative discourse as it is known today (Jessop 2008, 25; Schuller and Vincent-Lancrin 2009, 68). In the period prior to this and along with the developing knowledge society/economy discourse, the OECD increasingly promoted liberalisation policies, advocated the colonisation

of education by economic policies and facilitated the proliferation of the shifts in the organisation of the public sector towards new public management models (Amaral and Neave 2009, 95). By the 2000s the OECD engaged in strong advocacy of transnational provision of education, downplaying the negative effects of listing higher education among the liberalised services within WTO GATS process (OECD 2004). The OECD has also provided abundant amounts of statistical data, comparative studies and examples of good practice in higher education policy and reforms. One of exemplar publications of this kind is the review of tertiary education in selected countries with the title: "Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society" (OECD 2008).

In a nutshell, throughout its activity in the last three decades the OECD established itself as a hegemonic organisation promoting post-modern economic liberalism and pertaining policy ideas (Amaral and Neave 2009, 96). Along this course it actively constructed discourses to convey and normalise cognitive ideas at the programmatic level. It is, however, difficult to claim the activism or agency. Instead, the OECD can be interpreted as the reflection of the spirit of the time. It promotes and perpetuates the dominant and hegemonic ideas that originate in the historical structures. It thereby contributes to their normalisation and incorporation into the hegemonic order. As such, think tanks, agencies and organisations act in the service of establishing reality through the compilation and repetition of statistical indicators, through developing benchmarks, league tables, rankings etc. and through the support of the refined discourse including the repetitive flag concepts, buzz words, and catchphrase etc. (Jessop 2008, 25).

12.4 The transformation of higher education under the imagined knowledge economy

The imagined knowledge economy and its deriving discourses, once well refined, gained power over non-economic fields and policies, tethering them to the demands of economic goals, notably competition on the global market (Jessop 2008, 28). Higher education gradually moved to the centre of economic considerations. Because of strategic conceptualisation of knowledge for economic purposes in the imagined knowledge economy, universities became more politicised than ever. The ideation of universities as the sites of production of the essential resource for economic growth brought about a range of (cognitive) ideas on how to reorganise

the 'production' of knowledge. The shift to the imagined Knowledge economy required a profound rethinking of education involving knowledge creation, acquisition, transmission and organisation.

The discourse of the knowledge economy implies regional unity in the pursuit of a region's global competitiveness. Thus it implies an active role for EU institutions in developing and implementing strategies which also contain reforms in higher education (Robertson 2008). Namely, the idea of achieving competitiveness in a knowledge based economy subsumed the problem of low competitiveness of the region and insufficient or inadequate production of knowledge. This problem definition paved the way to the solution that inevitably involved higher education policy at the regional scale. Within such an oriented ideational course, the EU and especially the EU Commission gradually offered a broad range of policy solutions, policy ideas and mechanisms to encourage the implementation of policies that would engage higher education in the grand project of the knowledge economy (see Chapter on the EU). Under the umbrella of the same programmatic ideas, the Bologna Process also offered a set of concrete policy measures that would aim at increasing regionalisation or a de facto regional integration of higher education (Melo 2013; Hartman 2008; Robertson 2009a).

12.5 Critical analysis of knowledge economy paradigm in higher education

The central role of the state in the imagined knowledge economy is viewed as inherent in the modern programmatic ideas based in the neo-classical economic theories and its derivates such as Public Choice Theory, New Public Management, and Human Capital Theory. These schools describe the state as the central organiser of general public infrastructure, including research, education (human capital) and development of technologies (Krašovec 2013, 82). Thus the public authorities take over the costs of 'producing' knowledge and 'human capital' and thereby relieving corporate business from the costs of education. In this view the state became a sort of service to corporate business, taking over the risks of providing essential input for competitiveness on the global market (Hill 2007, 110). In what is considered the modern dominant (hegemonic) philosophy guiding the economic and social world, the role of the state is redefined (and not reduced) as well as redefining the relation between the state and the business sector. The state is expected to actively maintain the condition of competitive markets,

invest in new and existing economic sectors, developing high technology, and investing in 'human capital' (Krašovec 2013; Harvey 2005; Olssen and Peters 2005).

University and higher education gain a central (systemic) role in this gradual socialisation of the cost of technology and applied science. The discourse supporting this idea often stands on the argument of necessity to better connect universities with enterprise in the view of enhancing competitiveness of economy. For some authors this is just a euphemism for putting higher education directly in the service of business and economy, where the state and the EU expand their role of central planning and take care of implementing strategies that serve the business sector (Krašovec 2013, 93).

Governments are often also exposed to the bottom up pressures and pertaining communicative discourses. Namely the public holds the government accountable for the success or failure of the economy, thus putting the pressure on government to find solutions that would make the economy grow. This pressure creates the fertile circumstance for ideating the problem and thereby setting the course for the solution and in turn offers the legitimacy for the institutionalisation of policies and programmes of the EU (Serrano-Velarde 2011).

12.6 Distinctions and nexus between ideating of higher education in knowledge economy paradigm and the commodification of higher education

The authors analysing and interpreting the micro and macro levels of transformations of higher education conceptualise the *commodification of higher education* and *instrumentalisation of higher education for economic purposes* closely intertwined or even as single ideational and policy course (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005; Brown 2011; Maringe 2011; Nordesvard 2011; Robertson 2010a; Sauntson and Morrish 2011). Main overlaps can be found in the ideas on privatisation of financing, more deregulation and market principles, etc. However, other chapters, and this one, reveal a substantial distinction between the two. Scholars in this field are highly consistent in identifying 1) the utility of higher education outputs for the state, society and economy and 2) the personal utility of higher education and its service to business potential. While in the first the state keeps a high stake in education, maintaining also a high level of public 'investment', expecting returns in the form of skilled labour, innovations and knowledge as capital as well as (to a lesser extent) other effects that higher education might have in society.

In the second the state moves out of the domain of responsibility for financing. In the first category higher education is viewed as worthy public investment because it will 'produce' more skilled labour, thereby viewing the student as a product or commodity consumed by the state, society and above all the economy. This is distinguished from viewing higher education as just one of the businesses on the global market of services where students are the consumers, customers or units of profit.

This instrumental view of higher education for economic purposes and the pertaining utility discourse is far less reaching in its essence. Graduates as skilled labour and knowledge as capital are considered of public interest within the imagined knowledge society (Olssen and Peters 2005, 333; Naidoo and Jamieson 2005, 38). This imaginary is still a foreground discursive phenomenon. The knowledge economy discourse is referring to a system of programmatic level ideas characterised by a strong problem definition aspect and long term problem solving aim. The agents are referring to a dominant political and economic imaginary, using it consciously in their foreground discursive abilities in the discursive strategy. This is brought forward in both the coordinative and communicative discourse and aims at legitimatising a certain course of action. Even though overwhelmingly present, powerful and paradigmatic, the knowledge economy imaginary does not cut deep into the dominant system of values and meanings of higher education.

In contrast, the rise of the ideational phenomenon referred to as the commodification of higher education is indicating something far larger and more fundamental. It is reaching from the macro economic and business activities to the very micro level of educational relations and experience. It is part of the third level ideational shifts which, in contrast to the foreground nature of the first and the second level, sits more in the background - informing the agency and determining the action. It is structural, linked to the social forces and constituting the historical framework for action. According to Schmidt (2008, 206) it is a result of a larger ideational shifts in public philosophy and changes of the spirit of times. Thus in the neo-Gramscian fashion the above presented processes and changes tell us that larger shifts in social forces and historical structures are at work.

13. Conclusion

In 1979 Jean François Lyotard reported on the status and nature of knowledge in an utterly changed post-modern condition. He postulated the following:

The old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from the training (Bildung) of minds, or even of individuals, is becoming obsolete and will become ever more so. The relationship of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending, and will increasingly tend, the form already taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume – that is, the form of value. Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange (Lyotard 1984, 4).

Lyotard's contribution to understanding the historical context and the role of knowledge in it actually triggered the curiosity that led to this research project. However, the main focus was not knowledge, but higher education – more precisely, the ideations of higher education in the changing historical context of the emerging regionalisation (Europeanisation) processes. Yet the findings of this study only partially support what Lyotard more than three decades ago anticipated as the direction of ideational changes.

Higher education in the two emerging ideational streams

The analysis of European policy activity in the domain of higher education revealed a plurality of ideas and discourses from which it was possible to discern the general flow of institutional change. For heuristic purposes I classified the multitude of ideas in three ideational streams. If put in the perspective of the dynamics of change, one represents the 'old' institutional background of ideating higher education in European countries, while the other two mark the direction of change. Below I present them in inverse order:

Higher education in the function of increasing the European economy's competitiveness

The *knowledge economy* can be interpreted as the key policy concept in the ideological articulation of different partial world views and theories within a single discourse or hegemonic imaginary. It refers to a system of programmatic level ideas that imply the problem definition and propose a long-term, problem-solving direction. They thereby serve as a reference point for legitimising a set of policy solutions and a certain course of policy action. The agents refer to a

dominant political and economic imaginary, using their foreground discursive abilities in the discursive strategy. These ideas are predominantly grounded in the argument of necessity, which reflects their cognitive character.

The analysis of the discourse of the EU institutions, the discursive interaction and the underlying ideas reveals that it overwhelmingly emphasises the economic purpose of higher education. It reflects the growing power of performativity as a guiding principle and legitimising narrative that gradually normalises the cognitive ideas on higher education as a worthy public investment because it is expected to 'produce' more skilled workers and innovation, thereby contributing to productivity. The secondary analysis of the literature reveals that higher education (and research) subject areas that do not contribute at least indirectly to the economy tend to become underfunded or left out of the main funding schemes.

The knowledge economy imaginary is indeed powerful and paradigmatic, but in its essence it does not substantially alter the nature of higher education as a public institution. Namely, this imaginary does not exclude higher education from the public interest and responsibility. The state remains a central regulatory framework and university keeps occupying the role of constitutive institution of the state, although more of its economy.

Both of the stakeholders (Council of Europe and ESU) that I presented as cases of actors that attempted to contain the overemphasising of the economic role of higher education, hosted a process of the hybridisation of discourse whereby they accommodated the knowledge economy within their own coordinative discourse, reconciling it with the humanist liberal and socially emancipatory purposes of higher education.

Higher education as a transitional business and commodity

The other identified emerging trend of ideating higher education refers to higher education as an economic activity in itself. This especially implies the growing transnational provision of higher education, the expanding global markets for services, and the liberalisation of trade in higher education. From the analysis of communicative action in the Bologna Process and the implications of EU law for trade in higher education, it was possible to interpret the growing influence of international trade agreements and trade regimes in the realm of higher education. This phenomenon is represented by changing economic relations which, in turn, affect the ideas and institutions.

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In practice, these developments challenge the nature of higher education in the sense they are changing the basic relations and meanings such as the customer or consumer attitude of students to the university and teaching staff and the dominance of performance criteria and customer satisfaction imperative. The ideational shift is also referred to as the commodification of higher education and is based on the transformation of the educational process into a form that has an 'exchange' value rather than an intrinsic 'use' value, implying that education processes and knowledge can be 'captured' and 'packaged' in order to be bought or sold under market conditions across national boundaries.

In contrast with the foreground nature of the knowledge economy ideational stream, commodification sits more in the background, informing the agency and determining the action. It is difficult to identify the causalities, the historical path or the value/normative contaxt. It has deep roots in the shifting historical structures and thus takes part in the dynamics between social forces. In other words, it runs at the base of human experience and is thereby marking what Schmidt (2008) refers to as public philosophies. The first manifestation of these tectonics is often associated with the policy shifts in the US and the UK in the 1980s throughout the public sector. Changes of this magnitude in higher education are more advanced in the UK, but only in an early stage in European policy forums.

The fluid delineation between the two ideations and the meta-direction of change

In many respects, the division between the two ideational streams presented above appears fluid, and thereby inconsistent. For example, the abdication of state regulation in favour of new public management methods of governing the public sector, the performativity-driven (evaluative) governance mechanisms, and universities as competitive entities are only some of the overlapping elements in the two emerging ideations of higher education.

The fluidity of delineation between the two conceptualisations emerged through the discursive regularities and argumentation lines in the analysed data. For instance, the argument on the need for more funding in higher education is integral to the normalisation of both ideations of higher education and was found in the discourses of the examined European policy arenas (notably the EU, but also the Bologna Process, the Council of Europe etc.). It legitimises the extension of funding sources to private ones, but also justifies the transformations that entail more managerial (efficient) university governance structures and the charging of fees to students.

Thus, the two above presented ideational streams indicate a general direction of institutional change. In other words, it is not so much about two directions as it is about two different planes

or levels of generality and the mode in which the agency is involved in constructing the discourse. The first runs on a programmatic level and revolves around the discursive definition of problems, while the second belongs to the foundations on which the meaning and ideations of higher education are constructed.

The resistance to the ideational change – the resilience of the old norms and values

The emerging ideations of higher education presented above have so far not managed to become institutionalised and thereby supersede the norms and values of liberal humanist and welfare-state ideas. The values, beliefs and norms of 'old Europe' appear in a form of resistance against these emerging ideations. From the analysis of the logic of communication and the discourse of some ministers/national delegations at the Bologna Process summits it was possible to conclude that a particularly tenacious force resisting the advance of commodification and excessive economic instrumentalisation of higher education nests in the national institutional settings. The insight into the genesis of the Bologna Process revealed that Bologna itself was initially fuelled by the nation-states' defiance regarding the overemphasised monetary/market nature of European integration as opposed to a *Europe of culture*.

The discursive action resisting the advancing knowledge economy imaginary into higher education embraced the concepts of *social dimension* and more prominently *public responsibility* for higher education (notably in terms of funding). The two appeared as adversary of the *economic performativity* in an attempt to counterbalance the concepts in the coordinative discourse. The climax of this antagonism can be considered the attributing of a *multitude of purposes* to higher education institutions which may be interpreted as one of the most far-reaching, pan-European political agreements on the meaning of higher education.

The salience of the issue of *global trade in higher education* and the entrance of international trade regimes into the higher education realm has triggered considerable political action in European policy discourses. The norms, values and beliefs related to higher education as a *public good* guided by *academic principles* put the commercial principles in higher education at odds with what is deemed appropriate and legitimate.

The shifts in historical structure and the normalisation of cognitive ideas

The resisting potential of normative ideas grounded in the 'old' European institutional setting was, however, not strong enough to prevent the advance of the transformative discourses and ideas. The nation-states have proven not to act very intensively to prevent higher education being increasingly taken over by the EU and becoming subdued to the economic priorities. Thereby the advance of the EU's soft regulatory model into the realm of higher education has gained the support (or at least acceptance) of the member states. A similar interpretation can be made of the development of the Bologna Process: What initially seemed the voluntary participation of the member states was gradually transformed into monitored coordination whereby the signatory countries felt obliged by their commitment to the Bologna Process and the related follow-up structures (Ravinet 2008).

The emerging ideas of knowledge and higher education in the service of regional competitiveness showed certain resilience. This brings up the question of what makes these ideas so powerful in comparison to the established norms and values. The answer can be found in the interpretation of the shifts in the historical structure: The transnational nature of economic relations brought along the restructuring of society and redistribution of world power. This affected also the reconfiguration of institutions and paradigmatic ideational shifts. The communicative action and the ideational content of the discourses indicates a substantial degree of interconnection between regional restructuring of the economy, unification of the labour market and the tendency of harmonising the higher education systems. Boosting the mobility of students – the guiding principle of Europeanisation of higher education – approximates the idea of a mobile, skilled labour force. The single labour market policy goal is especially notable in the policy mechanisms overseeing the qualifications and quality assurance of higher education.

However, the structural change does not occur entirely by following an organic course. In the times of institutional instability the conjunctural moment for change arises - the window of opportunity for agency and accelerated transformation. In the analysis of the discursive action within the Bologna Process and the EU organisational structures was possible to observe the attempts of the actors to change institutional fabric, especially through the process of normalisation of new cognitive ideas. The logic of communication revealed that the techniques and sophistication of the communicative and coordinative strategy enable the penetrability of the emerging ideas. The cognitive ideas are gradually taking on a normative nature and becoming integral to widely accepted common sense. Against this backdrop, the agents use

their foreground discursive abilities to establish a consensus and normalise the cognitive ideas until they penetrate and merge into the national institutional settings.

In this context, the national elites are themselves to a certain extent subscribing to the emerging transnational ideas and thus motivated to intervene in the higher education sector in accordance with the programmatic ideas generated or articulated in the transnational policy arena. The ambiguity of the policy texts, gradualism, flexibility, seemingly non-binding nature of the provisions, and (not least) the potential pretext for introducing unpopular reforms have considerably contributed to overcoming or bypassing the potential institutional resistance. The pretext for national reforms was also one of the motives for commencing the Bologna Process. However, its initial success attracted other actors and ideas into the discursive interaction, making it much more than just a pretext.

The inception of the EU law penetrating the domain of higher education and a new constitutional trend

Besides the increasing trend of introducing soft mechanisms that potentially influence the course of reforms in the nation-states, the Europeanisation of higher education shows also the inception of the (supranational) hard law penetration into the realm of higher education. The research found that in certain circumstances the Treaty on Functioning of the EU, the EU Directives (on services and recognition of qualifications) and a number of ECJ judgements serve as a regulatory framework for deregulating the transnational higher education market. The transnational provison of higher education is a minor but yet increasingly important segment of higher education. The ECJ preference for the expansion of market-based integration is reflected in the accumulated jurisprudence in favour of deregulated trade in higher education. The analysis of EU law in conjunction with the activities of the EU Commission reveal the supremacy of free trade and market freedoms over the nationally embedded norms and values of education as well as the cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent. The advance and further normalisation of these emerging ideas is fostered by the gradual development of soft and hard legislation. Once aggregated, they form a sort of supranational constitutional order that also encompasses non-economic sectors such as higher education.

By viewing the findings and interpretations within a bigger picture one can interpret the direction and nature of the identified ideational and institutional transformations. Borrowing

Stephen Gill's (2003) conceptualisation, it is possible to discern silhouettes of a *new constitutional* formation that aims at securing the primacy of the market as the integrative paradigm and preventing the member states' authorities from undoing it. In some respects, this indicates a profound reconfiguration of state forms – a slow but relatively well traceable departure from the hegemony of the ideas of the nation- and welfare-state towards a limited yet powerful state form based on transnational historical structures and relatively insulated from popular-democratic accountability.

However, in terms of higher education, the new constitutionalism phenomenon is in its embryonic state. Moreover, the extent to which the guidelines and soft mechanisms are implemented in the national level is yet to be explored. The impact of the European level ideas on national level reforms of higher education is highly contested among scholars. Similar questions can be asked about the effectiveness of EU law. These issues were not dealt with in the scope of this research project, especially in which cases the EU level ideas are effective on national reforms and why.

The European coordinative sphere, the centrality of the Bologna Process and the role of the EU Commission

The complex European coordinative sphere of discourse in higher education is made up of many venues and arenas. In this multitude, it is possible to identify the Bologna Process and the EU institutions as the main venues where the discourse and ideas are confronted, deliberated and negotiated. The Bologna Process can be conceptualised as a typical coordinative arena where ideas on higher education were confronted in the search for a minimum common denominator on the roles, functions and meaning of higher education in Europe.

One of the outstanding characteristics of Bologna and the Europeanisation of higher education is the interactive dimension of the discourse. In the discursive interaction it was possible to discern a relatively constant group of people who formed a sort of epistemic community that played a considerable role in deliberating and forming the Bologna coordinative discourse. These epistemic communities involved experts, civil servants and national representatives and could be identified behind individual organisations and venues (the EU, the Council of Europe) or crosscutting the organisations (e.g. in the case of the Bologna Process). They essentially tried to negotiate and form a hybrid discourse to reconcile the economic view with the other ideated

purposes of higher education and pull the coordinative discourse towards one or the other ideational stream.

In the process of generating EU documents and legislation various EU institutions have addressed higher education directly, but not always. While the EU Parliament and the Council of the EU have played their role sporadically and only seldom taken the initiative, the EU Commission has played a significant role in the European higher education policy arena. The coordinative activity of the DG EAC civil servants, politicians and experts appeared intense and proactive. Their conscious shaping of the discourse and formidable coordinative political action reflect a considerable degree of agency. The strategy and tactics of their action show a high level of preparedness and an ability to perform on the stage of the coordinative policy sphere. Their negotiation and persuasion potential is amplified by the way they wield the discourse (thus engaging their foreground discursive abilities) and by the way they are presenting the ideas in a given institutional background (thus putting their background ideational abilities into action).

In the case of deregulation and the advancing market principles in higher education in the EU, the unit engaged is not DG EAC, but DG MARKT. This DG acts based on legislation regulating trade and the market, and when advancing the market freedoms. In the latter case, higher education is not addressed upfront but as a collateral effect of the market policies. Thus, the action of DG MARKT impinges on higher education legislation where it represents an obstacle to trade and economic activities related to education as a service.

The emerging global structuration of higher education

According to the interpretation of data from a decade of Europeanisation of higher education, it is possible to argue that the nation-states are not the only authorities when it comes to organising the types and diversity of higher education. The transnational landscape of higher education institutions is not only associated with the political formations like the EU. *Rankings* and *league tables* are an exemplar mechanism that affects this landscape and functions outside the domain of the public authorities.

Rankings are becoming a powerful symbolic tool for shaping and structuring the reality and attracting power and influence on a global scale. They are enhancing the status of already reputable universities and those with an advantage according to certain criteria (e.g. research).

The analysis of the communicative action in the case of the U-Multirank as an EU backed response to the established rankings revealed the salience of this phenomenon on the global scale. The expanding transnational activities of universities and the global market for education services are organically promoting the popularity and centrality of rankings in higher education policy. In relation to these processes, it is possible to observe the contours of a nascent *global structuration of higher education.* The shifts in soft and (in some cases) hard regulation from the national to the supranational level presented above is a prominent step in the restructuring higher education from the (nation) state centered system to the supranational levels.

The global structuration of higher education is closely related to the above described reconfiguration of social forces in the emerging transnational distribution of power. The concentration of reputable universities, and thus of authoritative knowledge, transcends the market interests of individual, business-oriented universities. It is moving to the centre of the global contention for power involving transnational elites and civil society, as well as nation states and international organisations. Knowledge and higher education are drifting towards the commodification. However, it is too early to say that this became institutionalised. We are not there yet.

An innovative analytical approach

Discursive institutionalism (or constructivist institutionalism), extended with one of the historicist and critical theories, proved to be an excellent choice for the analysis and interpretation of the policy processes in Europe. This relatively unexplored way of addressing the Europeanisation of higher education is the innovative methodological contribution of this dissertation to the scholarship on higher education. It assisted the exploring of the nature (meaning, roles, function and ideation) of higher education through interpreting the interactive process of discourse and the flow of ideas in the European politicy arena. Morover, this analytical blend enabled the study to shed light on a larger historical picture of the changes in ideation of higher education in contemporary Europe.

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List of the interviewees

1. Interview 1: Representative of the ESIB, the National Unions of Students in Europe in the Bologna Follow-up Group (2003-2005). 19.7.2011.
2. Interview 2: Head of the Department of Higher Education and History Teaching of the Council of Europe, a member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group and one of the authors of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention. 17.10.2010.
3. Interview 3: Responsible on behalf of the Greek ministry to co-ordinate the BFUG during the Greek presidency of the EU. 10.10.2010.
4. Interview 4: Chair of the Bologna Process secretariat (2003–2005). 14.10.2010.

5. Interview 5: Representative of Slovenia to the Bologna Follow-up Group from 1999–2010. 2.9.2011.
6. Interview 6: General Rapporteur of the Bologna Process between Prague and Bergen (2001–2003). 21.7.2011.
7. Interview 7: President of the European University Association 2001 -2004. 7.9.2011.
8. Interview 8: Responsible on behalf of the Greek ministry to co-ordinate the BFUG during the Greek presidency of the EU. Second interview, 20.9.2011.
9. Interview 9: Former official at the ministry responsible for higher education. 12.12.2012.
10. Interview 10: Former official at the French ministry responsible for higher education. 12.12. 2012.
11. Interview 11: Member of ESU Executive Committee 2012. 13.11.2013.
12. Interview 12: Official responsible for higher education at the Council of Europe. Second interview, 20.11.2013.
13. Interview 13: Danish representative in the BFUG 2012. 8.11.2013
14. Interview 14: Student member of the French delegation to the Bologna Process ministerial conference in Bucharest 2012. 19.12.2013
15. Interview 15: Former Rector of the University of Oldenburg, one of the initiators of Magna Charta Universitatum and later president of the Magna Charta Observatory. 23.6.2014.
16. Interview 16: High ranking official responsible for higher education in an EU member state throughout the 1990s and 2000s, also representing the member state in the Council of the EU and other international fora dedicated to higher education. 5.6.2012.
17. Interview 17: EU Commission, DG EAC officer working in the field of higher education. 28.06.2012.
18. Interview 18: Seconded expert at the European commission Directorate General for Education and Culture between 2006 and 2009. 2.7.2012.
19. Interview 19: Seconded expert at the European commission Directorate General for Education and Culture since 2011, formerly responsible for the education issues at a member state permanent representation to the EU. 28.06.2012.
20. Interview 20: EU Commission head of unit responsible for higher education between 2000 and 2006. 3.6.2012.
21. Interview 21: High ranking official at the EU Commission, DG EAC working in the field of higher education between 2000 and 2006. 14.5.2012.
22. Interview 22: Member state official responsible for education at a permanent member state representation (Sweden) to the EU. 5.6.2012.
23. Interview 23: Senior staff member at the European University Association. 27.11.2012.
24. Interview 24: EU Commission expert working for the DG EAC between 2002 and 2006. 29.6.2012.
25. Interview 25: Member state official responsible for education issues at a permanent representation to the EU (the Netherlands); formerly an official at the Directorate general for Education and Culture of the EU Commission. 1.6.2012.
26. Interview 26: Assistant to Luigi Berlinguer, Member of the EU Parliament. 4.6.2013

Povzetek v slovenskem jeziku

Poglavje 1: Uvod

Visoko šolstvo, kot ga poznamo danes, je zagotovo eden osrednjih gradnikov zahodne družbe, čeprav so prepričanja o tem, kaj opredeljuje sodobni koncept univerze, deljena. To ni presenetljivo. Podobno kot Evropa, ki ni homogena, se tudi visoko šolstvo ni razvijalo po skupnem homogenem modelu. Dolgo obdobje so razvoj univerz zaznamovale nacionalne države. Šele v nedavni zgodovini evropske integracije je visoko šolstvo postalo predmet čezmejnega sodelovanja in povezovanja. Ta trend je pridobil na pomembnosti predvsem v zadnjih nekaj desetletjih skozi različne projekte Evropske komisije in nenazadnje preko bolonjskega procesa (Corbett, 2005). Ob napredovanju političnih procesov na evropski ravni si lahko zastavimo vprašanje, kaj pomeni visoko šolstvo za sodobno evropsko družbo.

To je tudi iztočnica za pričujoči raziskovalni projekt, ki je v ospredje postavil ideje, vloge in funkcije visokega šolstva v sodobni Evropi. Izhodiščna teoretična predpostavka sloni na tezi, da so ideje gonilo političnih procesov. Skozi interaktivni proces diskurza se lahko ohranjajo ali spreminjajo in s tem determinirajo institucionalni okvir. Tako kot ideje tudi institucije niso fiksne. Obenem so lahko stabilni strukturni okvir, ki determinira družbene procese, ali konstrukti, ki so podvrženi spremembam skozi idejne in diskurzivne procese. Visoko šolstvo je del tega institucionalnega okvira in pripadajoče dinamike sprememb. Spremembe v ideaciji visokega šolstva sem interpretiral v kontekstu širših strukturnih sprememb in premika političnih procesov iz nacionalne na evropsko raven. Zanimala me je dinamika spremembe vloge, smotra in funkcij visokega šolstva v okviru vseevropskih reformnih procesov in pobud. Vprašal sem se, kaj ob intenzivnih reformnih procesih pomeni visoko šolstvo v današnji evropski politični areni.

Izbral sem evropsko raven kljub temu, da visoko šolstvo ostaja pomembno zasidrano v nacionalnih okvirih. Projekt namreč temelji na predpostavki, da je evropska integracija presegla gospodarsko domeno in da postaja transnacionalna regionalna razsežnost pomembno polje oblikovanja politik, idej in institucionalnih sprememb. Torej, uresničevanje reform na nacionalni ravni sega preko obsega te raziskovalne naloge. Raziskava je prostorsko omejena na Evropo, medtem ko je podrobneje upoštevan zgodovinski kontekst od devetnajstega stoletja do danes.

I. del

Poglavje 2: Analitični pristop

Osrednji analitični pristop raziskovalnega projekta se naslanja na konceptualni aparat *diskurzivnega institucionalizma*. Ta se osredotoča na idejno vsebino in interaktivni proces diskurza pri generiranju, koordiniranju in komuniciranju idej v danem institucionalnem kontekstu (Schmidt 2008; Schmidt 2010; Schmidt 2009a; Schmidt 2011).

Diskurzivni institucionalizem je mešanica konstruktivističnega in institucionalističnega pristopa, zato se v literaturi pojavlja tudi pod imenom *konstruktivistični institucionalizem* (Hay and Rosamond 2002; Hay 2008; Hay 2011), hkrati pa ga lahko štejemo za eno od vej novih institucionalizmov (Schmidt 2010). Za razliko od drugih analiz diskurza in novih institucionalizmov, ki so bolj statični in postavljajo v ospredje *strukturo*, posveča diskurzivni institucionalizem več pozornosti akterjem in konceptu *agenta* (agency). Delovanje akterjev ni povsem vezano na dane (zunanje) strukture oziroma institucije, torej ni zgolj ekonomsko pogojeno, racionalno preračunljivo, zgodovinsko determinirano ali skladno z normami in vrednotami. Institucije so namreč konceptualizirane kot simultano dvoje, kot struktura, torej fiksni in vnaprej dani kontekst, v katerem akterji mislijo, govorijo, delujejo, ter kot konstrukt akterjev, torej rezultat misli, besed in delovanja akterjev – agentov. Zato je diskurzivni institucionalizem primeren za razlago sprememb (tudi nenadnih) v prevladujočih idejnih tokovih in institucionalnem kontekstu, torej je primeren za interpretacijo nastanka novih institucij, zatona starih ter sprememb v strukturah, ki determinirajo družbeni svet.

Akterji delujejo kot del strukture z notranjimi dispozicijami, družbenim ozadjem, identiteto. Hkrati pa so tudi čuteči agenti, saj uporabljajo svoje diskurzivne sposobnosti in z logiko komunikacije (mimo spon obstoječega institucionalnega reda) konstruirajo, izražajo, legitimirajo, koordinirajo ideje ter ohranjajo ali spreminjajo institucije. Institucionalna struktura jih omejuje in hkrati jim omogoča delovanje, saj so jo sposobni uporabljati v politični interakciji oziroma jo umestiti v svojo diskurzivno strategijo.

Interaktivna razsežnost diskurza govori o prenašanju, predstavljanju, artikulaciji in izmenjavi idej med posameznimi akterji. V procesu oblikovanja politik med posamezniki in skupinami govorimo o *koordinativnem diskurzu*. Akterji so torej vključeni v proces koordiniranja sporazuma o idejah in z njimi povezanih odločitvah. Navadno gre za pogajanja, prepričevanja, trgovanja, ki vključujejo skupine strokovnjakov, organe izvršilne oblasti in druge akterje na

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pozíciji moči. S *komunikativnim diskurzom* pa akterji predstavijo, se posvetujejo in legitimirajo politične ideje splošni javnosti. Komunikativni diskurz navadno poteka od zgoraj navzdol, zlasti ko ga tvorijo politične elite, mnenjski vodje, službe za odnose z javnostmi itn., lahko pa poteka tudi v obratni smeri, ko gre za opozicijo civilne družbe, medijev, organiziranih skupin in državljanov na ulicah. Diskurz ni nujno nevtralna komunikacija, saj se lahko pojavlja tudi kot orodje manipulacije ali sredstvo za utrjevanje moči in prevlade družbenih, ekonomskih in drugih elit.

V idejno-vsebinski razsežnosti diskurza ločimo dva tipa idej. Prve so kognitivne ideje, utemeljene z logiko potrebe oziroma nujnosti, ki se pojavljajo, ko akterji opredelijo realnost in iščejo rešitve (politike) za prepoznane probleme, druge pa normativne ideje, utemeljene z logiko primernosti oziroma skladnosti z vrednotami, ki so značilne v okoliščinah, ko akterji poskušajo uskladiti politike s prevladujočim normativnim okvirjem. Ideje se ločijo tudi po globini in dosegu. Glede na doseg in splošnost jih lahko razdelimo na tri ravni: ideje na ravni politik, programske ideje ali definicije problemov ter ideje širšega strukturnega značaja, ki jih lahko poimenujemo tudi javne filozofije, duh časa, strukture razmišljanja itn.

Diskurzivni institucionalizem se je izkazal šibkost prav pri pojasnjevanju moči nekaterih idej v primerjavi z drugimi ter v interpretaciji tretje ravni idej oziroma historičnega ozadja, ki determinira moč in hierarhijo idejnih tokov. Med raziskavo sem namreč zaznal potrebo po interpretaciji širše zgodovinske slike, po izpraševanju izvora opazovanih procesov in ogrodja, v katerem se odvijajo. Za zapolnitev vrzeli sem diskurzivni institucionalizem dopolnil s prvinami kritične teorije, ki se naslanja na ponovno uporabo nekaterih konceptov Antonia Gramscija (2000) in sodobnih avtorjev, ki se naslanjajo na njegovo misel.

Pri t. i. neogramscievskem pristopu k mednarodnim odnosom gre za preplet ekonomsko-materialnih odnosov, idejnih tokov in institucij, ki tvorijo historično strukturo in s tem ogrodje za delovanje akterjev v danem zgodovinskem trenutku. Ta svojevrstna dialektika se lahko nanaša na nacionalne kulturne tvorbe, ali pa jih transcendira oziroma se nanaša na vzhajajočo transnacionalno tvorbo, ki nikakor ni le vsota nacionalnih držav, povezanih v mednarodne organizacije (Cox 1981; Cox 1999; Cox 2005; Bleier 2002; Apeldoorn 2002; Gill 2003a, Gill 2003b). Tako je moč pristopiti k interpretaciji transnacionalnih družbenih odnosov, pripadajočih silnic moči, vloge transnacionalne civilne družbe in državi podobnih organizacijskih in regulacijskih tvorb. Predvsem pa takšen pristop lahko služi pri interpretaciji

obsežne idejne podstati diskurzivnim tokovom, ki jih je mogoče zaznati v evropski areni visokošolskih politik.

Poglavje 3: Raziskovalna pot in metode

Raziskovalni projekt se je začel predvsem z radovednostjo in željo po odkrivanju novega ter vzpostavljanju novih odnosov med že odkritim. Hipoteza, analitični pristop in metode niso bili začrtani vnaprej. Začetek je bil osnovan predvsem na induktivni metodi raziskovanja. Na podlagi predhodnih raziskovalnih projektov sem izbral pilotno terensko delo. Za to uvodno nalogo sem izbral analizo bolonjskega procesa. Opazovanje in prve ugotovitve so me vodile v izhodiščno konceptualizacijo ter hevristični oris konceptualnih kategorij.

Sledil je izbor analitičnega pristopa in dodelave metod. Teze is poglavja 4 so služile kot vodilo za izbor nadaljnjih terenskih raziskav. Tako zbrane podatke sem interpretiral skozi izbran analitski pristop. V poglavjih 5, 6 in 7 sem podrobneje analiziral nekatere trenutke politične interakcije in diskurzivne aktivnosti v bolonjskem procesu, medtem ko sem v poglavjih 8 in 9 več pozornosti namenjal procesom Evropske unije, povezanih z visokim šolstvom.

V tretjem delu (poglavja 10, 11 in 12) sem ugotovitve in začetne interpretacije iz drugega dela postavil v širši strukturni in institucionalni kontekst ter ponudil teoretično interpretacijo v okviru izbranega pristopa. Pregled literature o evropskih procesih v visokem šolstvu, o zgodovini idej in univerze ter o spremembah v družbeno-političnem in ekonomskem kontekstu sem uporabljal in navajal sproti, zato ni posebnega poglavja o pregledu literature.

Podatke sem zbiral predvsem v obliki pisnega gradiva. Osredotočil sem se na politične in strateške dokumente, pravne akte, sodbe sodišč, korespondenco, arhive, zapiske, zapisnike, spomine itn. Opravil sem intervjuje in razgovore nestrukturiranega in odprtega tipa. Iz njih sem razbiral diskurzivne regularnosti in idejne vzorce, logiko komunikacije, institucionalno ozadje in druge elemente, ki so prispevali k interpretaciji in razumevanju idej o visokem šolstvu. Opravil sem tudi veliko informativnih razgovorov, ki so služili usmerjanju nadaljnjih korakov raziskovanja, ugotavljanju kronologije, preverjanju podatkov in pridobivanju drugih informacij. Poleg osnovnega analitičnega okvira sem za interpretacijo podatkov v začetnih fazah projekta uporabil še nekatere prvine *induktivno izpeljane teorije* (grounded theory).

II. del

Poglavje 4

Bolonjski proces lahko okarakteriziramo kot meddržavni poskus uskladitve programskih idej za reformo visokega šolstva, torej kot koordinacijo vladnih, medvladnih in nevladnih organizacij ter Evropske komisije o skupnem imenovalcu visokošolskih politik po Evropi. Gre za iskanje reformne formule kot odgovora na ideje o izzivih, s katerimi se sooča sodobno visoko šolstvo. Odvija se v razmerah postindustrijske in postmoderne družbe, gospodarske in družbene globalizacije ter diskurzivnega pomika znanja v središče gospodarske sfere.

Bolonjski proces deluje kot prizorišče (politična arena) za politično interakcijo. Soočenje različnih, pogosto nasprotujočih si idej v okviru tega procesa ni naključje. Skozi proces se vzpostavijo in vztrajno utrjujejo idejni tokovi, ki nakazujejo smer institucionalnih sprememb. Nakaže se tudi odpor do teh sprememb, ki se naslanja na institucionalizirane ideje oziroma družbene norme in vrednote.

V skladu z diskurzivnim institucionalizmom lahko bolonjski proces označimo kot mešanico koordinativne in komunikativne sfere s poudarkom na prvi. V prvi vrsti gre torej za izrazito koordinativni diskurzivni proces, saj se ob diskurzivni interakciji (pogajanjih, argumentiranju, prepričevanju) oblikujejo, utemeljujejo in spreminjajo ideje o reformah visokega šolstva. Zaznati je mogoče tudi sled komunikacijskih diskurzov, ki so bili premišljeni in usklajeni v zunanjih diskurzivnih prizoriščih (npr. EU, Svet Evrope, ESU/ESIB).

Na podlagi pregleda osnovnih dokumentov procesa (petih komunikejev in dveh deklaracij), ki so jih sprejeli ministri evropskih držav, zadolženi za visoko šolstvo, je diskurzivne teme in pripadajoče ideje o visokem šolstvu mogoče hevristično strniti v tri tokove.

1. Idejni tok visokega šolstva mnogoterih smotrov kot osrednje institucije evropske družbe, ki temelji na vrednoti egalitarnosti, javni odgovornosti ter demokraciji. Ta idejni tok izhaja iz liberalno-humanističnih idej in povojnega institucionalnega ustroja Evrope.

2. Idejni tok, ki predpostavlja osrednjo vlogo visokega šolstva za doseganje konkurenčnosti gospodarstva . Ta idejni tok je osnovan na programski ideji o problemu gospodarske stagnacije in rešitve, ki je predstavljena skozi diskurz gospodarstva in družbe znanja.

3. Idejni tok, ki visoko šolstvo smatra kot tržno blago oziroma dobičkonosno storitev na svetovnem trgu. Ta tok idej se pretaka na zelo temeljni (paradigmatski) ravnini, saj vsebuje preoblikovanje razumevanja esence visokega šolstva.

Zgornja razdelitev predstavlja izhodišče za nadaljnje zbiranje podatkov na terenu ter kot vodilo za razvijanje konceptualizacij in teoretskih kategorij.

Poglavje 5

Sodobna država je nujno povezana z javnim dobrim in temelji na demokratičnem postulatu, da je za državo dobro tisto, kar je dobro za ljudi – in kar je dobro za ljudi, definirajo ljudje sami (Nixon 2011, 16). V tem vrednostnem in idejnem sistemu demokratične države so ljudje konstituirani kot demokratični državljani v javni sferi. Eden ključnih stebrov institucionalnega aranžmaja, ki izhaja iz teh vrednotnih izhodišč, je izobraževanje in znotraj tega tudi visoko šolstvo ter univerza s svojim prispevkom k demokratizaciji in državljanstvu.

Tako nekako lahko na kratko opišemo idejno hegemonijo, ki je prispevala k stabilnosti historičnih struktur in s tem institucionalnega aranžmaja (zlasti) "zahodnega" sveta. Vendar so te iste historične strukture izpostavljene spremembam, ki se odražajo tudi v logiki komunikacije, diskurzih in idejah na področju visokega šolstva. Bolonjska politična arena je bila prizorišče soočenja starega in novega. Koordinacijski diskurz nakazuje kako so kognitivne ideje o reformah, ki naj bi reševale temeljne gospodarske probleme sodobne Evrope, trčile ob norme, vrednote ter ustaljeno institucionalno ogrodje države blaginje in liberalno-humanističnih idej. Koncepta javnega dobrega in javne odgovornosti sta se v tem soočenju pojavljala kot izstopajoči diskurzivni regularnosti in ključno zaznamovala diskurz odpora proti napredovanju kognitivnih idej o prevladi gospodarske vloge visokega šolstva.

Svet Evrope se je izkazal za enega glavnih vseevropskih promotorjev diskurza o javni odgovornosti za visoko šolstvo. S svojo diskurzivno strategijo je v sklopu isto usmerjenih akterjev deloval v smeri omejevanja in uravnoteženja ekonomističnega diskurza »gospodarstva znanja«.

Podrobnejša analiza koordinativnega diskurza znotraj Sveta Evrope pa je pokazala, da organizacija sama predstavlja politično areno z živahno notranjo diskurzivno interakcijo. Zaznamovala jo je ožja skupina uradnikov in strokovnjakov. V zakulisju priprave političnih dokumentov je namreč delovala nekakšna *epistemska skupnost*, ki je s svojimi diskurzivnimi sposobnostmi in zavedanjem idejnega ozadja prispevala k oblikovanju koordinativnega diskurza in konfiguraciji idej. Iz sprejetih političnih dokumentov in objav strokovnjakov, ki so sodelovali v razpravi o javnem dobrem in javni odgovornosti za visoko šolstvo znotraj Sveta Evrope, je moč zaznati intenziven napor za iskanje kompromisnega diskurza, ki bi vase sprejel vzhajajoči idejni tok gospodarske relevantnosti visokega šolstva in obenem ohranil druge, zlasti demokratične smotre, ki izhajajo iz idej liberalno-humanistične misli in države blaginje. Nastal je hibridni diskurz, ki je opustil neposredno označevanje visokega šolstva z javnim dobrim.

Namesto tega je bil gospodarskemu smotru sodobnih visokošolskih ustanov dodan spekter drugih družbenih, kulturnih in znanstvenih smotrov. Ta definicija je bila predložena in sprejeta tudi v bolonjskem procesu, s čimer so se evropski ministri na deklarativni ravni poenotili o pomenu visokega šolstva.

Relativno intenziven notranji razmislek, ki je vodil v hibridizacijo diskurza, kaže na potrebo po pomiritvi institucionalnega (vrednotnega) ozadja Sveta Evrope z novim idejnim trendom, ki ga zastopa zlasti Evropska komisija. Del procesa formiranja novega (hibridnega) koordinativnega diskurza Sveta Evrope je tudi redefinicija ideacije države in odnosa med državo in visokim šolstvom, in sicer v smeri politike *novega upravljanja javnega sektorja*, več upravljavske *avtonomije* in večanja deleža zasebnega financiranja (Melo 2013). Svet Evrope se je torej odrekel svoji vlogi doslednega varuha idejne hegemonije povojne Evrope v korist kompromisa z vzhajajočimi idejnimi tokovi pod oznako »gospodarstvo znanja«. To lahko interpretiramo kot odraz moči in prodornosti sodobnih političnih imaginarijev in spremembe v institucionalnem ustroju evropske družbe. Postavlja se vprašanje, zakaj imajo ti idejni tokovi tolikšno moč oziroma od kje izhajajo. Odgovor je potrebno poiskati v večjih premikih v odnosu med družbenimi silami in tvorjenju novih historičnih struktur.

Poglavje 6

Pojem *socialna dimenzija* je prišel v bolonjsko diskurzivno areno s študenti, in sicer v praškem komunikeju (2001). Od takrat je stekel proces opredeljevanja in konkretizacije pojma. Na dveh seminarjih in skozi koordinativno interakcijo v bolonjski koordinativni sferi se je socialna dimenzija pomensko izostrila predvsem kot skrb za uresničevanje socialne enakosti, solidarnosti, socialne mobilnosti in dostopnosti visokega šolstva. Gre torej za prvine, ki jih lahko umestimo v normativni kontekst države blaginje.

Koncept se je pomensko dopolnjeval v dialektiki z drugimi idejnimi tokovi znotraj bolonjskega koordinativnega diskurza. Nekje sredi prve bolonjske dekade je socialna dimenzija (v sozvočju z javnim dobrim in javno odgovornostjo) prevzela osrednjo vlogo v diskurzivnem nasprotovanju pretiranega poudarjanja gospodarske funkcije visokega šolstva. Soočenje idejnih tokov o visokem šolstvu se je torej odvijalo preko antagonističnih konceptov, ki so se mestoma medsebojno uravnotežili.

Napetosti med diskurzi in pripadajočimi idejami so akterji skozi koordinacijski proces (usklajevanja in pogajanja) skušali pomiriti s tehnologijo t. i. *hibridizacije diskurzov*.

Dokumenti reprezentativne evropske študentske organizacije ESU izkazujejo hibridizacijo diskurza, v kateri prevladujejo normativne ideje na osnovi načela egalitarnosti, medtem ko je hibridizacija znotraj organov Evropske unije (EU) potekla v korist prevlade kognitivne ideje o visokem šolstvu kot motorju evropske gospodarske konkurenčnosti. Razlika kaže ideološki antagonizem ter ponazarja, kako v praksi poteka uporaba diskurzivnih in idejnih spretnosti akterjev. Medtem ko je v prvem diskurzu socialna dimenzija pogoj za dosego konkurenčnosti regije, sta v drugem diskurzu gospodarska uspešnost in zaposljivost diplomantov pogoj za uresničevanje socialne razsežnosti visokega šolstva.

V primeru hibridnega diskurza EU je moč interpretirati poskus iskanja legitimnosti oziroma premagovanja institucionalnih ovir za napredovanje kognitivnih idej o reformi visokega šolstva. Tovrstni hibridi so zastopani v zvezah konceptov, kot so *enakost in učinkovitost,* ter v evfemizmih, kot je *delitev stroškov*, ko gre za privatizacijo financiranja s šolninami. Torej, diskurz EU kaže na to, da so se pisci zavedali neskladja nekaterih kognitivnih idej z evropskimi in nacionalnimi sistemi vrednot, prepričanj, izročil in norm. Pri tem izstopa diskurzivna sposobnost in sposobnost uporabe idejnega ozadja pri premagovanju normativnih ovir za napredovanje kognitivnih idej o tem, kako je potrebno reformirati visokošolske sisteme in univerze. Več o dinamiki oblikovanja diskurza EU sem predstavil v poglavju 8.

Kljub znatni prisotnosti in vplivnosti normativnih idej »socialne Evrope« v pogajanjih in iskanjih kompromisnega koordinacijskega diskurza je razvidno, da raste prodornost idejnega toka gospodarske intrumentalizacije visokega šolstva v smeri odziva na potrebe trga dela in inovativnega gospodarstva. Tudi poglavje 6 je pripeljalo do zaključka, da gre v evropski koordinativni sferi (pa naj si bodo to diskurzivna prizorišča v okviru bolonjskega procesa, EU ali civilne družbe) za hierarhijo idej. Povedano v jeziku diskurzivnega institucionalizma – institucije so lahko tako omejujoče strukture, kot konstrukti, ki jih akterji ohranjajo ali spreminjajo. Burna diskurzivno-idejna aktivnost na evropski visokošolsko-politični sceni je pokazala pomen delovanja akterjev v smeri spreminjanja institucionalnega ogrodja, zlasti skozi kompleksne strateške pristope za normalizacijo kognitivnih idej. Diskurz torej omogoča napredovanje idej in se hkrati pojavlja kot integralni del institucionalnega tkiva.

Poglavje 7

V poglavju 7 sem predstavil analizo dveh intenzivnih soočenj idej skozi koordinativni diskurz. Pokazala je, kako vplivni so lahko nacionalni sistemi vrednot, norm in interesov na delovanje

političnih predstavnikov pri pogajanjih in usklajevanju političnih dokumentov (komunikejev) bolonjskega procesa. Delovanje francoske delegacije na ministrskem vrhu v Berlinu (2003) je bilo pogojeno z republikanskimi vrednotami ter pod vplivom komunikativnega diskurza francoske civilne družbe (zlasti sindikatov in študentskih organizacij) in splošne javnosti. Francozi so uporabili argument neprimernosti obravnavanja visokega šolstva kot tržne storitve, saj da se tako podcenjuje njegovo socialno in kulturno vlogo. V navzkrižju s tem idejnim tokom so se znašli Britanci, ki so podpirali svoje tržno in izvozno naravnane univerze. Umikanje regulacije, prehajanje na zasebno financiranje in tržna načela namreč delujejo v prid širitvi obsega storitev transnacionalnega izobraževanja, kjer med drugimi blestijo tudi britanske univerze. Tretji primer nacionalnega normativnega konteksta pri diskurzivni interakciji se je pokazal pri nordijskih državah. Vrednote države blaginje so usmerjale politično držo norveških in danskih predstavnikov na ministrskem srečanju bolonjskega procesa v Bukarešti (2012).

V zgoraj opisanih primerih politične interakcije so prišli na površje trije idejni tokovi, ki sem jih hevristično konceptualiziral v poglavju 4. Spremembam ideacije univerze se akterji zoperstavljajo s sklicevanjem na egalitarne vrednote in liberalno humanistično evropsko izročilo. Ideacija visokega šolstva kot tržne storitve je prišla do izraza šele skozi upor nasprotujočih sil. Slednje so se mobilizirale ob zunanjem dogodku – ko je šlo torej za napredovanje politik v smeri deregulacije trgov za transnacionalno izobraževanje v okviru Svetovne trgovinske organizacije ali ko je šlo za krčenje *javne odgovornosti* za financiranje visokega šolstva ob 'svetovni krizi'. Akterji so izkazali svoje diskurzivne in idejne spretnosti predvsem pri sklicevanju na norme in vrednote (npr. Francozi) ter uporabi navidezno konsekvenčnih in racionalnih argumentov (npr. Angleži).

Tudi v interpretacijah podatkov v poglavju 7 sta se izpostavila dva toka idej: visoko šolstvo kot instrument v gospodarstvu znanja ter visoko šolstvo kot donosna tržna storitev. Oba sta trčila ob normativno idejno ogrodje socialne in liberalno humanistične Evrope. Toda med seboj se razlikujeta predvsem po ravni splošnosti, kar sem podrobneje interpretiral v poglavjih 11 in 12.

Poglavje 8

Angažma EU v visokem šolstvu je razviden iz bogate pisne sledi, ki jo puščajo politični dokumenti Evropske komisije, Evropskega parlamenta in Sveta EU. Terensko raziskovanje je razkrilo tudi intenzivno politično aktivnost znotraj organov, med organi ter v kompleksnih procesih

dogovarjanja in usklajevanja politik. Interaktivni proces diskurza in živahna politična arena so nudili odlično podatkovno osnovo za uporabo diskurzivnega institucionalizma.

EU se je izkazala za prizorišče izrazito koordinativne diskurzivne interakcije. Analiza podatkov med leti 2000 in 2011 je pokazala relativno podrobno sliko o ideji univerze ter o ciljih in trasi reformnih ukrepov. Finančna in upravljavska avtonomija naj bi vodila v tekmovalnost, učinkovitost, kakovost, odličnost in raznolikost univerz. Tako naj bi se bolje odzivale na širok spekter družbenih in gospodarskih potreb ter prispevale k konkurenčnosti Evrope. Uveljavljanje sistema za zagotavljanje kakovosti ter orodij za preglednost in priznavanje kvalifikacij naj bi pospešilo mobilnost in skupaj z osredotočanjem na učne izide prispevalo k zaposljivosti diplomantov. Diskurz EU na področju visokega šolstva se ujema z idejami o problemih ter političnim imaginarijem gospodarstva in družbe znanja, torej s programsko ravnjo splošnosti idej.

Pri tem je Evropska komisija osrednje prizorišče oblikovanja besedil in generiranja diskurza. »Podjetni« posamezniki ter ožje skupine uradnikov in strokovnjakov (epistemska skupnost) so izkazali izjemno sposobnost zaznavanja institucionalnih ovir pri uveljavljanju kognitivnih idej o reformi visokega šolstva ter se tako izkazali v vlogi agenta, ki stremi k spreminjanju institucionalnega okvira. Diskurzivno strategijo ter aktivnosti v koordinativni sferi so prilagodili pričakovanemu konfliktu med reformnimi predlogi na eni strani ter normami in vrednotami držav članic na drugi. V določenih trenutkih so se epistemski skupnosti pridružili tudi stalni predstavniki Sveta EU, medtem ko so aktivizem redkeje izkazale predsedujoče članice EU. V analizirani politični interakciji je bila pobuda pri oblikovanju tekstov pretežno v rokah Evropske komisije, natančneje Direktorata za izobraževanje in kulturo. Slednji ima strokovno kapaciteto na občutno višji ravni kot ostali organi EU.

Kljub temu, da Evropska komisija pripravlja tekste, koordinira dogovarjanja in promovira reformne ukrepe, bi bil zaključek, da politične ideje o »gospodarstvu znanja« in o visokem šolstvu v korist gospodarske rasti izvirajo v Evropski komisiji, površen. Podobne diskurze najdemo pri Organizaciji za gospodarsko sodelovanje in razvoj (OECD), v poglavju 5 pa je razvidno, da se jim skuša približati ali vsaj prilagoditi tudi Svet Evrope. Gre torej za diskurz in pripadajoči idejni tok, ki se širi in uveljavlja tudi na račun tradicionalnih institucij.

Nadnacionalna narava projektov na področju visokega šolstva se odraža tudi na projektu U-Multirank, ki ga sponzorira Evropska komisija. Gre za rangiranje visokošolskih ustanov na podlagi

kompleksnega in mnogoterega sistema meril. S tem naj bi spodbudili konkurenčnost evropskih univerz, saj naj bi ta inovativen pristop prispeval k dvigu njihove privlačnosti/slovesa. Nezadovoljstvo Velike Britanije ob predstavitvi U-Multirank sistema rangiranja je še en pokazatelj strateške naravnanosti te države v smeri deregulacije in vzpostavljanja svetovnega trga visokošolskega izobraževanja. Doslej dobro uveljavljene in splošno sprejete rangirne lestvice imajo namreč tako oblikovano shemo meril, da favorizirajo prav univerze iz angleško govorečega sveta. U-Multirank bi lahko na dolgi rok ogrozil ta monopol, saj upošteva tudi kriterije, pri katerih so recimo kontinentalne univerze v prednosti pred britanskimi. Tako kot v poglavju 7 se je tudi v tem poglavju izkazalo, da v britanskem političnem prostoru napreduje in se postopoma institucionalizira ideja o visokem šolstvu kot donosni (izvozni) storitvi. Skladno s tem Velika Britanija deluje v nadnacionalnih in mednarodnih koordinacijskih arenah.

V kombinaciji z reformnimi ukrepi, političnimi skripti in mehkimi regulacijskimi mehanizmi bolonjskega procesa predstavljajo pobude, priporočila in projekti EU nekakšno nadnacionalno normativno in regulacijsko shemo, ki potencialno lahko usmerja reformni tok v evropskih državah.

Poglavje 9

V poglavju 9 sem predstavil procese in razvoj zakonodaje EU, ki posega v visoko šolstvo kljub temu, da Pogodba o delovanju EU izključuje harmonizacijo na tem področju. Obvezujoča (trda) zakonodaja EU posega zlasti v urejanje področij priznavanja kvalifikacij in transnacionalnih oblik visokega šolstva. Pri tem sta pomembni direktivi, ki urejata priznavanje strokovnih kvalifikacij in trgovino s storitvami na notranjem trgu v kombinaciji s sodno prakso Evropskega sodišča.

V osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja se je razmahnila ideja o skupnem trgu kot o temeljnem motorju integracijskega projekta. Skladno s tem se je razvijal tudi normativni sistem, ki predstavlja podlago za odločanje Evropskega sodišča. V primeru pravne praznine sodišče praviloma odloča v prid načelom, ki izhajajo iz integrativnih idej oziroma ki vodijo v nadaljnjo integracijo. Tudi v primerih sodb na področju visokega šolstva je analiza pokazala na hierarhično razmerje med normami in vrednotami. Ko je šlo za kolizijo med pogodbenima principoma »prostega trga« ter »pristojnosti držav nad izobraževanjem zaradi kulturne in jezikovne raznolikosti«, je sodišče namreč dalo prednost prvemu. Odločbe so vzpostavile prakso, po kateri države članice ne smejo postavljati pogojev ali zavračati priznavanja izobraževanja, ki se odvija na njenem teritoriju, v kolikor je to potekalo po programih, ki so

javno veljavni v drugi državi članici. Z drugimi besedami – skozi sodbe sodišča se je vzpostavilo načelo države izvora, ko gre za javno veljavnost izobraževanja. To velja tudi v primerih franšiznih pogodb v izvedbi dobičkonosnih podjetij. V dveh od štirih primerov je tožbo proti državi, ki je zavračala priznavanje takšnih diplom, sprožila Evropska komisija.

S sodno prakso v primeru direktive o priznavanju kvalifikacij se je dopolnjevala zakonodaja, ki omogoča širjenje tržnih načel na račun družbeno-kulturnih funkcij izobraževanja. Ta isti trend se je pokazal tudi v pilotnem poskusu Evropske komisije, da bi podobno prakso izpeljala še v okviru direktive o storitvah na notranjem trgu. Z uporabo t. i. kršitvenega postopka ter s sklicevanjem na sodno prakso Evropskega sodišča in tržna načela Pogodbe o delovanju EU, je Evropska komisija skušala vplivati na spremembo visokošolske zakonodaje v eni držav članic, da bi s tem lajšala pogoje za delovanje transnacionalnih oblik visokega šolstva.

Trend novega konstitucionalizma v visokem šolstvu znotraj EU ni omejen zgolj na priporočila, smernice in deklaracije, torej mehke mehanizme. Mešanica EU direktiv in sodne prakse Evropskega sodišča predstavljajo obvezujoč regulacijski okvir, ki odraža tudi idejno hierarhijo, torej prevlado tržne integracije nad kulturnimi in družbenimi funkcijami visokega šolstva.

III. del

Poglavje 10

Družbeno-kulturna raznolikost in zgodovinske specifike botrujejo temu, da v Evropi ni mogoče govoriti o tradicionalni ideji univerze. Pa vendarle staro celino povezujejo splošni idejni trendi in preoblikovanje historičnih struktur, ki so ključno determinirali ideje o vlogi in funkcijah visokega šolstva skozi čas. Če nekoliko poenostavimo, sta bili ključnega pomena dve obdobji in pripadajoči idejni hegemoniji.

1. Obdobje liberalno-humanističnih idej, kjer univerza postane temeljna institucija buržoaznega projekta nacionalne države, ter ideje o znanosti v vlogi emancipacije človeštva.
2. Obdobje po drugi svetovni vojni, ko se je utrdila programska hegemonija države blaginje in ideja visokošolske izobrazbe kot mehanizma za socialno emancipacijo posameznika ter demokratizacijo družbe.

Ta hevristična razdelitev ponazarja skupni imenovalec za institucionalizirane ideje o visokem šolstvu oziroma idejno osnovo za različne tipe izročila evropske univerze. Iz njih so izpeljane norme in vrednote, ki se pojavljajo v koordinativnem diskurzu v evropskih arenah visokošolske

politike. Na te vrednote se naslanja idejni tok, ki nasprotuje ekonomski instrumentalizaciji izobraževanja in obravnavi visokega šolstva, kot dobičkonosne storitve.

»Staroevropske« ideje o visokem šolstvu lahko deloma najdemo v deklaraciji evropskih univerz poimenovani *Magna Charta Universitatum* (1988). Kasneje, v povezavi z bolonjskim procesom, se pojavljajo v definiciji smotrov visokega šolstva pod pokroviteljstvom Sveta Evrope. V obeh primerih gre za deklarativno sklicevanje na institucionalizirane ideje iz devetnajstega in dvajsetega stoletja, torej na normativne ideje, ki izhajajo iz zgoraj predstavljenega institucionalnega oziroma širšega historično-strukturnega konteksta zahodnega sveta.

Historične strukture, ki temeljijo na liberalno-humanistični in egalitarni idejni hegemoniji, predpostavljajo izobraževanje kot vrednoto in *javno dobro*. Diskurzivna konstrukcija javnega dobrega se v sodobnih dominantnih diskurzih spreminja. Sodobni politični diskurzi, prepleteni z dominantnimi ekonomskimi idejami, namreč visoko šolstvo postavljajo na kontinuum med javne in zasebne donose. Tako skušajo vzpostaviti »racionalno« diskurzivno sosledje, ki relativizira vrednote in norme, povezane z visokim šolstvom, in tako spodjeda "star" institucionalni okvir.

Poglavje 11

Poglavje 11 je posvečeno konceptom in teoretiziranju ugotovitev iz drugega dela, ki se vežejo na idejne tokove in z njimi povezane sodobne trende. Teoretiziral sem o smeri sprememb v ideaciji visokega šolstva ter o širšem institucionalnem in zgodovinsko-strukturnem kontekstu te idejne dinamike.

V tem transformacijskem trendu, ki je razviden iz evropskih političnih procesov, sem interpretiral odnos med prej zaznanima (poglavje 4) idejnima tokovoma, ki se sicer prepletata, a vendarle ju lahko uvrstimo na dve različni diskurzivni ravnini oziroma na dve ravni splošnosti idej. Oba tokova sta odraz premikov v razmerju med družbenimi silami. Toda medtem, ko je prvi vpet predvsem v problemsko utemeljen imaginarij družbe in gospodarstva znanja, ki je dobro zaznaven v diskurzivni interakciji in odgovarja na konstruiran problem potrebe po gospodarski rasti in konkurenčnosti (druga raven splošnosti po Schmidt, 2008), gre pri drugemu idejnemu toku za globlje premike v historičnih strukturah ter odnosu med idejami, institucijami in gospodarskimi trendi (tretja raven po Schmidt, 2008). Imaginarij družbe znanja sem podrobneje konceptualiziral in interpretiral v poglavju 12, medtem ko sem v pričujočem poglavju razvil interpretacijo in teoretično umestil drugi, bolj temeljni idejni premik.

Analiza diskurzivne in idejne razsežnosti procesa evropeizacije visokega šolstva je pokazala, da se ta odvija v kontekstu širših strukturnih sprememb. Živimo v času, ko se ideje države blaginje slabijo na račun vzpona idej o svobodnem trgu ter umiku države iz upravljanja in zagotavljanja javnih storitev. Pri tem država abdicira del svojih pristojnosti v korist zunanje evalvacije ter posrednega upravljanja javnih storitev. S tem se materializira programska ideja o *novem upravljanju javnega sektorja*, kar se ujema s kognitivno idejo o organizacijski preobrazbi univerze. *Avtonomija* je postala osrednji element koordinacijskega in komunikacijskega diskurza, ki tako vlade kot institucije in širšo javnost nagovarja o potrebi po posodobitvi univerz. Koncept avtonomije je *rekontekstualiziran*, saj ne gre za avtonomijo v povezavi z akademsko svobodo, temveč gre za upravljavsko avtonomijo, samoregulacijo in tržno delovanje.

Rastoča industrija transnacionalnih ponudnikov visokošolskega izobraževanja učinkuje na spremembe v materialnih pogojih in odnosih, kar vpliva na idejne tokove in institucionalno ozadje diskurzov v evropskem in globalnem obsegu. To se odraža tudi v politikah in strategijah. Velika Britanija je na primer svoje univerze postopoma sistemsko prepuščala avtonomiji upravljavcev ter konkurenci. Kognitivna ideja o tem, da morajo biti britanske univerze delno tržno regulirane, konkurenčne, privlačne in izvozno naravnane, je bila skozi leta izpostavljena normalizaciji in na nek način institucionalizaciji.

Pri ideaciji visokega šolstva kot dobičkonosne storitve na trgu gre za globok premik v konceptualizaciji šolstva. Tržnima načela in izmenjavo kot osrednjim procesom. Pogosto se uporablja izraz *poblagovljenje* (commodification). Ta označuje preobrazbo izobraževalnega procesa v obliko, ki namesto ponotranjene uporabne vrednosti nosi menjalno vrednost. Tako sta izobraževalni proces in znanje lahko zamišljena kot tržno blago, ki ga lahko kupimo ali prodamo pod tržnimi pogoji na brezmejnem trgu (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005). Akademske prakse so tako vse pogosteje vrednotene po svojem dobičkonosnem potencialu. Ta tektonski premik v ideaciji visokega šolstva se odraža vse do mikro ravni. V nekaterih okoljih je zaznaven proces redefinicije pedagoškega odnosa. Pogosto se uporablja metafora kupca, ki izbira storitev, jo plača ter s tem pridobi moč nad ponudnikom in izvajalcem storitve. Odnos med študentom in učiteljem se spreminja v odnos med stranko in storitvenim podjetjem. Govorimo lahko o "koncu profesorja", a ne zaradi informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije, kot je leta 1979 napovedal Lyotard (1984), temveč kot posledica poblagovljenih odnosov med univerzo, učiteljem in študentom.

Tržno umeščanje univerz je podkrepljeno z raznimi pobudami in mehanizmi, med katerimi izstopa naraščajoč trend rangiranja univerz. Popularnost rang lestvic prispeva k opredelitvi vloge, funkcij, smotra in vrednot povezanih z univerzo. Rangiranje tako postaja močno simbolno sredstvo, s katerim se normalizirajo ideje o visokem šolstvu. S tem se ustvarjajo in utrjujejo strukture ter reproducirajo odnosi moči. Najpopularnejše rang lestvice se najraje poslužujejo kriterijev, ki v ospredje porivajo predvsem elitne ameriške in britanske raziskovalne univerze in s tem še dodatno utrjujejo njihov status in sloves. Ustvarja se novo, transnacionalno strukturiranje univerz, kjer uspevajo predvsem tiste, ki se osredotočajo na znanstveno-raziskovalno vlogo. Tako se vzpostavlja transnacionalna vertikalna hierarhija in s tem nova oblika elitnosti visokega šolstva. Znanje kot dobrina postaja del neenakomernega globalnega (pre)razporejanja (javnih) dobrin (Marginson 2013). Borba za opredelitev »dobre univerze« je postala ključna v tekmi za moč in središčni položaj držav in regij v globalni strategiji.

Pričujoča raziskava je pokazala, da prav v globalni prerazporeditvi družbenih sil tiči ključ za razumevanje hierarhije diskurzov in idej. Svetovni trg visokošolskih storitev ter gospodarski konkurenčni boj med regijami slonijo na novih idejnih osnovah, utrjujejo nove institucionalne aranžmaje ter usodno zaznamujejo ideje o visokem šolstvu. Nastajajoča historična struktura ni omejena na nacionalne kulturne formacije, temveč se vzpostavlja na transnacionalni ravni.

EU je postala nadnacionalna politična tvorba, vendar ni replika nacionalne države. Na osnovi prerazporeditve družbenih sil se vzpostavlja nov regionalni red, ki izhaja iz transnacionalnih ekonomskih odnosov, transnacionalne civilne družbe in idej tržnih svoboščin. Odločanje o visokošolski politiki se deloma prenaša na nadnacionalne organe. To se odvija tako na osnovi mehkih mehanizmov, kot so priporočila, reformne skripte smernice, standard primerjave (sem sodijo komunikeji bolonjskega procesa in priporočila Evropske komisije), kot na osnovi obvezujoče zakonodaje skozi sodno prakso Evropskega sodišča in direktiv Evropske komisije. Opisani trend nekateri avtorji označujejo tudi kot *novi konstitucionalizem* (Gill 2003a). Na ta način se materializira idejna hegemonija in vzpostavlja sistem, ki preprečuje, da bi skozi demokratične mehanizme odločanja nacionalne države preusmerile reforme in politiko.

Privolitev držav v postopno prenašanje pristojnosti za oblikovanje politik in regulacijo visokega šolstva na raven EU je možno razložiti z interpretacijo prepleta dinamike v historični strukturi in razmerja med družbenimi silami.

1. Nacionalne elite se zlivajo v enovito transnacionalno elito, ki predstavlja blok koncentracije moči. Na vrhu te družbene tvorbe najdemo ekonomsko elito (lastniki, finančna elita, izvršilni upravljavci itn.), ki sloni na podpori politične elite. Tako je pot tlakovana transnacionalnemu idejnemu konsenzu in vzpostavitvi hegemonije. Nacionalne elite, ki so predhodno izhajale iz raznolikih institucionalnih ozadij, sedaj težijo k poenotenju.

2. Akterji, ki promovirajo ideje in reforme, se zavedajo svojih diskurzivnih potencialov in idejnega ozadja. Zelo dobro izdelana diskurzivna strategija akterjev – agentov v koordinativni in komunikativni sferi je pogosto odlična podpora normalizaciji kognitivnih idej o reformah in evropeizaciji visokega šolstva.

3. Akterji se na ravni držav članic poslužujejo evropskih reformnih skript kot pretveze za uveljavljanje reform, ki se ne ujemajo z normami in vrednotami v domačem okolju. Tako se skušajo izogniti odporu civilne družbe ter splošne javnosti.

Poglavje 12

Skozi celoten raziskovalni projekt se je pojavljal pojem gospodarstva in družbe znanja. Kljub temu, da je šele tretji del disertacije namenjen teoretičnemu vidiku, se je že skozi predhodna poglavja izoblikoval obris konceptualizacije tega pojma oziroma interpretacija idej, ki se pojavljajo v diskurzu ekonomije in družbe znanja. Kljub temu, da v nekateri teoretični literaturi besedni zvezi *gospodarstvo znanja* in *družba znanja* označujeta dve različni vsebini, se v političnem diskurzu pojavljata pretežno kot sopomenki. Empirično sta površno opredeljeni, delujeta pa kot vodili za ideologije, ki učinkujejo na ravni javnih politik (Jessop 2008, 20).

Diskurz gospodarstva znanja se na političnem prizorišču EU pojavlja kot krovna platforma za sistem programskih idej, ki definirajo problem in nakazujejo rešitve. Gre torej za idejno hegemonijo, v mejah katere se oblikujejo politike različnih področji, vključno z visokim šolstvom. Imaginarij gospodarstva znanja osmišlja investicije v visoko šolstvo, raziskave in inovacijske sisteme v pričakovanju zagona trajnostne gospodarske aktivnosti z visoko dodano vrednostjo. Državni izdatki in reformne poti za večjo »odzivnost« za potrebe gospodarstva tako pridobivajo na legitimnosti.

Ideje, ki jih nosi diskurz gospodarstva znanja, so kognitivne, torej osnovane na argumentu potrebe po reševanju identificiranega problema. Uvrstimo jih lahko na programsko raven splošnosti idej po Schmidt (2008). V veliki meri gre za diskurzivni konstrukt, ki se skozi

diskurzivno spretnost akterjev uporablja za osmišljanje politik in ki ponuja idejno ozadje za institucionalne spremembe.

Za razliko od idejnega toka, ki sem ga opisal v poglavju 11 in ki izhaja iz premikov v širši historični strukturi, lahko idejni imaginarij gospodarstva znanja označimo za plitvejši in bolj prehodne narave (pa čeprav rezultat zgoraj opisanih sprememb v historični strukturi). Z nekaterih vidikov se oba tokova v določeni meri prekrivata, saj oba nakazujeta paradigmatičen odmik od norm in vrednot, ki visoko šolstvo povezujejo z liberalnodemokratsko hegemonijo in idejo države blaginje. V obeh primerih lahko zaznamo zmanjševanje vpliva države na račun tržnih načel ter v tem duhu tudi deregulacije visokega šolstva s tržno usmerjenimi visokošolskimi ustanovami in občutnim povečevanjem zasebnega deleža pri financiranju. Toda v imaginariju gospodarstva znanja država in njene agencije ohranjajo ključno vlogo tako pri financiranju kot pri zagotavljanju kakovosti in drugih sistemskih rešitvah za zagotavljanje ustreznega odziva visokega šolstva na potrebe visoko inovativnih podjetij ter drugih gospodarskih aktivnosti.

Poglavje 13: Zaključek

Visoko šolstvo je bilo, je in ostaja v središču evropskega institucionalnega sistema. Kljub temu, da smo priča zatonu nacionalne države, ohranja pomembno vlogo v utemeljitvi nacionalnih kulturnih tvorb, zlasti v smislu norm in vrednot, ki osmišljajo družbeno in kulturno življenje. Analiza logike komunikacije v evropskem političnem prostoru je pokazala, da visoko šolstvo namreč še vedno povezujemo z vrednotami in načeli, kot so enakost, emancipacija, napredek človeštva, demokratizacija. Toda dinamika reform na evropski ravni nakazuje obsežnejše spremembe v odnosu med družbenimi silami in s tem spreminjanje institucionalnega ogrodja družbe. Akterji v vlogi agentov vztrajno spreminjajo institucionalni okvir s tem, ko skozi spretno diskurzivno strategijo in ob tektonskih spremembah v historičnih strukturah institucionalizirajo kognitivne ideje oziroma normalizirajo velike idejne premike. Ideje, ki jih je moč zaznati v diskurzu *gospodarstva in družbe znanja,* postavljajo visoko šolstvo v vlogo motorja gospodarskega razvoja. V tem imaginariju država ohranja visoko stopnjo interesa za vzdrževanje regulacijskih mehanizmov, financiranja in evalvacije uspešnosti univerz. Raziskava pa je pripeljala do interpretacije še enega, vzporednega idejnega trenda – do ideacije visokega šolstva kot dobičkonosne storitve na čezmejnih trgih. Odpiranje globalnega trga storitev predstavlja gospodarsko priložnost za transnacionalne oblike izobraževanja. Zaznati je moč globalnega strukturiranja visokega šolstva na osnovi hierarhije univerz in geografske

zgostitve visoko kotirajočih raziskovalnih univerz. Ideacija visokega šolstva kot tržnega blaga izhaja iz tektonskih premikov v historičnih strukturah – v razmerjih med spreminjajočimi se gospodarskimi odnosi, idejnimi tokovi. Ti se razvijajo v smeri vzpona hegemonije ideje trga in transnacionalnih ekonosmkih ter družbenih odnosov. Za interpretacijo institucionalizacije in prevlade ideje o poblagovljenem visokem šoltvu je bilo zbranih premalo podatkov oziroma je v tem historičnem trenutku prezgodaj.

Ključne besede: visoko šolstvo, ideje, diskurz, institucionalni kontekst, historične strukture, edukacijske politike, univerza, znanje, evropeizacija, bolonjski proces, gospodarstvo znanja, transnacionalno izobraževanje, globalni trg storitev, reforma, poblagovljenje.