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Higher Education in Transition

Reconsiderations on Higher Education in Europe at the Turn of Millennium

PAVEL ZGAGA

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Content

Preface

It is a great pleasure for me and the Faculty of Teacher Education at Umeå University to publish the book *Higher Education in Transition – Reconsiderations on Higher Education in Europe at the Turn of Millennium***.** The writer, Professor Pavel Zgaga, has a long experience as an educational researcher at the University of Ljubljana. He graduated in philosophy and sociology in 1975, and has been a lecturer in contemporary philosophy. He took a Ph.D. degree in Philosophy in 1988. His thesis, From Renaissance to the Crisis of Marxism, is in the Slovenian language.

Professor Zgaga has served the Slovenian Government in different ways. He was appointed Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Education and Sport, was appointed a Member of the Council for Higher Education and also served as Minister of Education of the Republic of Slovenia. In 1996 he was appointed Vice President of the Unesco and Council of Europe's diplomatic conference for the adoption of the Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region. Professor Zgaga has also been head of the working group "Education, Training and Youth" in the negotiating team for Slovenian accession to the EU. He also signed the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) and the Bologna Declaration (1999) on behalf of Slovenia.

Professor Zgaga has been Dean of the Faculty of Education and he is currently Director of the Centre for Education Policy Studies, which is a research and development institute engaged in policy development, perhaps best known for its work on the South East European Education Cooperation Network. He is also a member of the Joint Working Party "Partnerships for Educational Renewal" Council of Europe, Higher Education and Research Committee (CC-HER) and Education Committee (CC-ED).

Professor Zgaga's professional and research interests have their focus on social philosophy and the philosophy of education. He has published several papers and monographs. I can mention a few. His interest in policy issues is mirrored in titles like *School Failure and Education Policy in a Social Transition*, *Review of National Policies for Education. Latvia. Examiners Report* and *Educational Policy and Quality in Education*. Both *The Prospects of Teacher Education in South-east Europe*, and *Looking Out: the Bologna Process in a Global Setting. On the External Dimension of the Bologna Process* shows his interest in the development of teacher education in a European perspective.

Professor Zgaga has remained engaged in the Bologna process, serving as a general rapporteur and board member of the Bologna Follow-up group. He has also produced reports on the impacts of the Bologna Process and then especially on university curricula and teacher education. Professor Zgaga is a member of a teacher education network, TEPE (Teacher Education Policy in Europe), where his competence is highly estimated and in great demand.

Professor Zgaga was appointed Honorary Doctor of Philosophy at the Faculty of Teacher Education at Umeå University in 2007 and he has contributed to our work in different ways. He was a visiting professor at our Faculty for two months in 2006 and was involved in lecturing our doctoral students. His speeches were highly appreciated both by students and colleagues. During his stay a conference about the Bologna process was arranged. This event was very inspiring and gave answers to many questions.

His great knowledge, his way of reflecting on philosophical dimensions in relation to educational issues, but also his humbleness cannot be too highly praised.

Gun-Marie Frånberg
Editor

Introduction

This is a book on both universities and higher education in general at the turn of the millennium. The last 20 years is only a very tiny part of the history of universities. Interest in studying the history of higher education normally comes with an accumulation of personal experience. My very first experience with a university came at the end of the 1960s and start of the 1970s when I enrolled at the University of Ljubljana. It was an exciting period, not only for me and not only for students in Ljubljana. In general, universities looked so different from what we were told about them before enrolment. Even the generation that had enrolled a few years before us looked different. It was a period of the student movement, radical political engagement, 'alternative' cultural engagement, new lifestyles and, last but not least, a new critical approach to academic studies. It was a period of 'opening up' higher education.

International mobility programmes were extremely limited and reserved just for a lucky few students but it posed no obstacle for us to travel (i.e., to hitch-hike) and to gain further experience. My first brush with student life abroad, totally coincidentally, was at the University of Amsterdam in summer 1971. It was another world – with some very similar and very familiar features in comparison with what I knew from my home. Later I visited ever new universities and colleges and my research interest increasingly became associated with higher education. Yet, only some three decades later I really understood that we had witnessed a tectonic, global *transition in higher education* in that – today rather remote – period.

About two decades later, in the late 1980s, another exciting period started. Again, it was a turbulent period in the political, economic and social sense; from a personal experience point of view even more turbulent that the other before. Everyday life seemed to turn around in a few years. My country of that time, Yugoslavia, found itself in a process of decay; however, it was 'indecent' to talk loudly about this open secret in public before the official announcement of its death was made and, what was particularly strange, there was not much understanding of this uneasiness abroad.

It may be that academic contacts were an exception. University life changed a lot in this period as well. The political context of my country was increasingly dark but there were also some dawns of hope on the horizon. On one side, the process of gradual democratisation of political life – in particular in my country,

(the federal republic of) Slovenia – also resulted in the blooming of new incentives in culture, education and research. On the other side, this process contributed to emerging new and new opportunities for co-operation with abroad, in particular within Europe. At the turn from the 1980s into the 1990s, higher education institutions in my country got access to the Tempus programme of the European Communities. This was an important systemic step forward. There were also important individual steps, of course. In 1989, I attended a conference on *perestroika* in Oxford which was an excellent opportunity to reflect on the spirit of time from an academic point of view and to exchange views with colleagues from all over Europe – still divided by the Wall – and noticed for the first time that this was not also a turbulent period in higher education only from a former socialist country's point of view. It was the first time that I came across the idea – still very unclear and very rough – that we were again approaching a period of tectonic *transition in higher education*, perhaps just the next step of the previous one.

The next months, weeks and days had been passing at a more and more extreme pace. Europe entered the 1990s convinced that nothing would be the same any more. It was a dangerous feeling, however. When entering a new period, people sometimes forget the past. But the past does not disappear; in fact, the past is only rounded-up in such periods; that is, it is 'constructed'. The future became a challenging issue. In 1992, I changed my academic work to work at the Ministry of Education until the end of the decade. It was an excellent opportunity to get experience of (higher) education from the other perspective as well. This was operative work but a number of fragments, drafts and papers remained in my folders from that period as well. After my return to academe in autumn 2000 I mainly devoted myself to higher education studies but kept contacts and links regarding what was going on 'in the field'. This was in particular the broad flow of the Bologna Process – another 'transition in higher education'. The more I was involved in discussions on the '*European Higher Education Area*' (EHEA) and the '*European higher education beyond 2010*' the more I liked to get a chance to reflect on 'the transition in higher education' in general.

In autumn 2006 I had a pleasant opportunity to spend two months with the support of the Swedish Research Council at the University of Umeå. Within my work plan there was also a draft of the present book. My extremely friendly and collegiate hosts, the creative atmosphere and excellent working conditions made it possible to start on this extensive work: primarily to collect and revise various materials which I stored in previous years as well as to start with further

studies. When I had to return home, the first draft of the book was already on my computer. The draft text was later further revised and the final product is now ready for interested readers.

As this book is based on several fragments and texts which have been partly presented or even published – but revised and rewritten – it is necessary to make some notes on its 'history'. The background to the first and partly the second chapter, dealing with the main trends in contemporary European higher education, was a presentation prepared for an international conference on tertiary education organised jointly by the University of Zagreb, the Croat Ministry of Education and the World Bank in Dubrovnik in 2005. The third chapter was rewritten on the basis of a paper prepared and published for a Council of Europe conference on higher education governance (see Kohler and Huber, 2006). The background to the fourth chapter, dedicated to the 'transition' period and personal reflections on it, was a number of fragments written in the period between 1997 and 2005. The background to the fifth chapter, which deals with the issue of meritocracy and democracy within academia, was a presentation discussed at a small colloquium in Oxford in summer 2003 which has remained unpublished. The sixth chapter on higher education and public responsibility was again prepared on the basis of a paper written and published for a Council of Europe conference (see Weber and Bergan, 2005). The last chapter in this book is based on a lecture I gave to the Swedish national postgraduate school in Educational Work (NAPA) at the Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Umeå during my last visit in autumn 2007.

My deepest thanks go to Professor Per-Olof Erixon who was my closest colleague and most direct host during my stay in Umeå in 2006, and to Dr. Björn Åstrand, Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Education. I am also deeply grateful to Professor Emeritus Daniel Kallós from the University of Umeå as well as to Professor Ivan Svetlik from the University of Ljubljana who were kind enough to take on the task of reviewing the book. Their critical notes, comments and recommendations were extremely valuable during the final editing of the book. At the last phase a support from Dr. Gun-Marie Frånberg, the editor of the book series, was crucial and I thank her as well. There are, of course, many other colleagues and friends to whom I am grateful for their co-operation during the abovementioned periods. It is impossible to mention all of them and not to forget somebody. If they are reading this book they will certainly know that my gratitude is sincere.

The author

CHAPTER 1

Reconsidering European higher education:
massification, Europeanisation and globalisation

Any attempt to define *current trends* demands us to divide and distinguish them from *previous trends*. The logic of current trends can merely follow previous trends. Sometimes their logic might differ in appearance but still be rooted in earlier trends. Other times the logic of current trends is clearly opposed to the logic of previous trends. In order to understand the substance of current (or present) trends it is necessary to establish their relationship with the past. Yet, the past and the present are relative notions. If it is today's higher education that is under scrutiny, then where and when should we begin? What is the point in time of breaking off from *previous* higher education?

To give a general – and now in practice the most often used – description of recent processes in European higher education we may use the term *Bologna Process* or the emerging *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA). This »new European higher education brand« (Zgaga, 2003: 98) symbolises a whole set of important policy issues in higher education which have been broadly discussed at institutional, national and European levels since 1999. However, if we look more closely at some of these issues it becomes obvious that the 'Bologna agenda' has an important pre-history.

The ideas presented in the *Sorbonne Declaration* of 1998 are its direct predecessor. Yet these ideas were even emerging in previous debates: in preparing national policy responses to problems of the development of higher education, in comparing and confronting these responses (and the logic behind them) in a broader arena such as e.g. within European Union consultation processes or within the Council of Europe and Unesco as in the case of the *Lisbon Recognition Convention*. These debates would have been very different had the decision

to enlarge the European Union or had the turbulent events seen in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s etc. not occurred.

The background is thus expanding. Yet our task here is not to start writing a modern history of higher education in Europe; it is about summarising current trends in different parts of Europe. At this point, however, it is necessary to define the *turning point* at which the issues and problems of modern higher education are rooted, irrespective of their national contexts. Recent literature reveals a high level of consensus that this turn is most closely linked to the *transition from elite to mass higher education*. Historically, in the developed countries it occurred during the period of industrial growth after the Second World War. At the beginning of the 1970s it was already clear that universities had entered a new era – but *which era*?[1] The transition from elite to mass higher education involves a shift whose full dimensions we probably still do not understand.

The genesis of mass higher education and its challenges

The expansion of higher education began during the 1960s. The growing demand for places at universities was a combined result of economic development and a higher number of candidates from the relevant age groups. This stronger demand was clearly not some abstract arithmetic outcome. It was not only a simple response to the growing employment options. It was also a result of the population's higher social and cultural expectations. Despite the obvious fact that this expansion was driven by economic and political factors which were more or less common to various developed industrial countries of the West, there were clear differences in the 'national tempos'. Behind the increase in particular countries we can recognise special national circumstances: shifts in domestic politics, social and cultural backgrounds, particularities of the functioning of national higher education systems etc. Since the 1980s, changes in the economy, technology and the labour market have further reinforced the existing demand for higher-level training and, *at the turn of the millennium, the academic landscape was totally different from that seen in the 1960s.*

In the so-called EU-15 countries,[2] the number of students in higher education more than doubled in the last quarter of the 20th century. A relatively moderate

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[1] At this point, a personal note seems to be necessary to make any possible subjectivism clear: the author started his university studies in 1970.

[2] The European Union before May 2004. The mark 'EU-10' refers to the 10 new EU member states since 1 May 2004. The mark 'EU-27' refers to the EU member states of today (2007) and the mark 'EU-46' to the Bologna participating countries since the last Bologna Summit (London 2007).

increase can be noticed in traditionally well-developed higher education systems (Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and France), while the biggest increases are more characteristic of the 'suburbs' (Portugal, Greece, Ireland and Spain) and/ or those countries which joined the EU at later stages. In the early period after the Second World War only a few percent of young people – predominantly male – undertook higher education (similarly to their parents' generation); at the end of the century there was on average already almost one-third of the age cohort in higher education while the number of female students had already overtaken their male colleagues in many countries (Eurostat, 2003, pp. 90-106). These shifts are simply incredible from previous points of view but they also pose serious questions for current policy-making at different levels. Certainly, these trends are not merely limited to Western European countries.[3]

The political changes in Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s brought about, *inter alia*, an even more noticeable rise in the number of students in higher education. The relative delay of the 1970s and 1980s was more than compensated for during the 1990s in almost all of these countries. Europe did away with its internal divisions and today it is somewhat easier to make comparisons.[4] When we observe Europe in a politically non-polarised and geographically broader context, the growth of student numbers in higher education slowed down in Western Europe – in a few cases it was even negative: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy (Eurostat, 2003, 90-91), whereas it achieved the highest peaks in Central and Eastern Europe (with the exception of Bulgaria). During the last decade of the 20th century, growth in student numbers was marked by an index of only 105 in the EU-15 and even 150 in the EU-10; an integrated index for the EU-25 is 111. Naturally, the increase in student numbers gradually led to a bigger share of the population with a tertiary education (here we leave questions

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[3] Canada and the United States exceeded the limit of a 50-percent *gross enrolment ratio* in higher education already in 1980; in 1990 they even reached 71.2 and 72.2 percent, respectively. During the same period, Australia shifted from 25.2 to 35.0 percent, New Zealand from 27.0 to 44.5 percent, South Korea from 14.7 to 37.7 percent, while Japan decreased slightly from 30.5 to 28.7 percent (Unesco, 1993, pp. 144-147). Using the same *gross enrolment ratio* methodology , in 1990 Western European countries mostly achieved a ratio close to one-third of the age group (Finland with 48.2 percent at one extreme and Portugal with 22.6 percent at the other) while the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were close to one-quarter (former East Germany with 34.8 percent and Bulgaria with 30.1 percent at one extreme, former Czechoslovakia with 17.0 percent and Hungary with 14.5 percent at the other; Romania with 8.6 percent and Albania with 7.0 percent seem to be special cases at that time). The increase has been immense during the last ten years, particularly in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.
A note on the *gross enrolment ratio*: »Total enrolment in education at third level, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the five-year age group following on from the secondary school leaving age« (Unesco, 1993, p. 113).

[4] From methodological and interpretative points of view it is always necessary to warn about just comparing abstract figures and not taking different political systems, cultures, education sectors etc. into account.

of quality and effectiveness aside). On average, 21 percent of the population aged 25-64 had attained a tertiary education in the EU-15 by 2002.[5] Today, twice as many children obtain tertiary education qualifications than their parents.

Nowadays, Europe is being challenged by a *population decrease*: there are fewer and fewer young people in almost all countries. The high enrolment ratios achieved during the last few decades will surely continue and even rise to over one-half of the relevant age group; on the other hand, the decrease in the young population is expected to reduce in absolute figures the demand for places in the – now extremely expanded – higher education sector. This shift will pose – in fact it is already posing – new challenges in addition to the already known challenges of mass higher education.

In Europe, *primary education* became a standard (or at least a standard expectation) for the entire population in the 19th century, still in the early age of the industrial society. Yet, in practical terms it was only achieved much later. During the economic recovery after the Second World War, on the way towards a post-industrial society, this standard expectation was upgraded to *upper-secondary education*; which has still to be fully realised.[6] At the turn of the millennium, at the entrance to the knowledge society, such expectations seem to have finally encompassed *tertiary education*: »A historic shift is occurring in the second half of the 20th century: tertiary education is replacing secondary education as the focal point of access, selection and entry to rewarding careers for the majority of young people« (OECD, 1998: 20).

The reasons people in the modern world decide to commence higher education differ considerably from the past. Nevertheless, we can still fully understand traditional individual aims like the 'pursuit of the truth' and 'disinterested research' or a simple desire to join a profession (or continue a family tradition in practicing a profession) in order to help people care about their body, property or soul – while simultaneously gaining a highly recognised status in society. We

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[5] The geographical distribution is still large: there are Finland (32) and Belgium (28) on one side and Italy (10) and Portugal (9) on the other. The picture does not vary so much in the countries of the EU-10: from Lithuania (44) and Estonia (30) to Poland or Czech Republic (12) and Slovakia (11). The generation distribution is also large: e.g., in the EU-15countries there is only 15 percent of those with a tertiary education attainment in the age group 55-64 years but still 27 percent in the age group 25-34 years. Between 1996 and 2002, the biggest increase in a population with a tertiary education attainment was noticed in Finland (+ 11) followed by France and Spain (+ 6) and the United Kingdom (+ 4). The EU-15 average for this period is + 3 percent (Eurostat, 2003, p. 29). It should not be overlooked that these shifts mostly reflect changes in enrolment during the 1980s; last but not least, it was a period when the 'baby boom' generations of the 1960s and 1970s were entering tertiary education.

[6] »European Benchmark: by 2010, at least 85% of 22-year-olds in the EU should have completed upper-secondary education«. The present level (data of 2005) of the upper-secondary completion rate in the EU is 77%; the best three performing countries (all are from the EU-10: Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia) are already at a level over 90% (see Commission, 2006b: 17-18).

can understand our predecessors but we also know that the specific social contexts in which our individual aims and wishes are formed in concrete ways have changed greatly since previous times. In ancient Egypt, literacy was a very high privilege for a very limited stratum of people; yet it is a non-disputable demand of all of us today and we learn to read and write at the very beginning of our schooling. In the early industrialisation period, there was a common belief that all workers needed to read and write (yet some people tried to neglect this for a longer time); today it is one of the main family and social concerns to grant all young people through the education system at least a secondary vocational qualification – including as a qualification to continue higher education. Rewarding careers – not for the minority but for the majority of young people – are today offered by advanced training. Higher education is no longer primarily a personal *call* or *privilege*; it is a *social demand*: modern societies cannot function without increasing the number of educated and skilled people who work in the economy and public services or without expanding the research and knowledge that drive modern civilisation.

Modern universities can be happy about this. Yet complaints have instead quite often been heard from the academic world. If one takes these complaints seriously then it is difficult to ignore their arguments. Mass higher education has totally changed the traditional university. Classes have grown in size and lectures being delivered in big halls has become a metaphor for higher education; a metaphor which has been broadly used in the media. The increasing numbers of students have led to criticism by (not only) teachers regarding 'falling standards' and today's students' 'alleged ignorance'. The growth in student numbers has not been accompanied (at least not proportionally) by new teachers. Nevertheless, today there are many more teachers – and many more new higher education institutions – than before but there is also a new popular discourse concerning 'excellent', 'average', 'poor' or even 'scandalous' teachers and institutions. Yet, these complaints should stem from students and not academics![7]

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[7] Derek Bok, formerly President of Harvard University, states in his noteworthy book (first edition 2003) on »the commercialization of higher education« sentiments of an American senior student »from a large state university« which could also be agreed to by many students from European universities: »In my four years at …, I have had exactly four classes with under twenty-five students and a real professor in charge. All the rest of my courses have been jumbo lectures with hundreds of students and a professor miles away, or classes with TAs [graduate student teaching assistants], or not regular faculty« (Bok, 2005: 89). Needless to say that similar cases could be found at many European higher education institutions as well. – P.S. We will not hide our appreciation of Bok's analyses and will return to him again.

Were universities ready to cope with the challenges of mass higher education when they started to appear? Obviously not! The new situation was quite a surprise for everybody. Over several years (some) people understood that the world had changed – yet, not for the first time after the 12th century – and that the university is in a position to reconsider its *mundane mission*. The 'splendid', 'optimal' but closed and isolated universe of the *ivory tower* could be just a myth.[8] If one-third of an age cohort attends instead of 2 percent then there are not only 'born talents' among them; however, they all deserve active and quality teaching and we should not just wait to see who will succeed and who will be left in the margins. It is excellent if the need to know has spread so much! Today, if the government seeks higher enrolment levels and new study programmes with an emphasised vocational dimension for the sake of improved employability and general welfare then university rectors should consider this with due attention. Finally, it would not be in line with *academic* traditions if they did not hear voices outside of their closed towers: some of these traditions have also been to serve society.

Modern university is not a monastery. As the 'pursuit of the truth' might sound a little 'transcendent' today, the university as a place of learning and research has in certain ways always been open and connected to society.[9] Modern theories on university and higher education institutions generally distinguish between their various genuine roles or tasks. They include to undertake research and teaching at today's universities, namely:

(1) to maintain and develop an *advanced knowledge base*;
(2) to train – young and not so young – people for their *professional careers*;
(3) to prepare them for a life as *active citizens in a democratic society*; and
(4) to contribute to their *personal growth*.[10]

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[8] »As defined pejoratively, the ivory tower is a myth, because in modern institutions of higher education there has always existed tension between service to the public and more contemplative scholarship« (Rosovsky, 2002: 14). In contrast to the common comprehension that links the metaphor of the 'ivory tower' to centurial academic traditions, Rosovsky prescribes its first application to universities or scholars to H.G. Wells in *The New World Order* (1940).

[9] »The universities were both a result of and a driving force behind the rationalisation and urbanisation process that went hand in hand with the opening-up of society« (Zonta, 2002: 26).

[10] This position, developed within discussions on higher education during last two or three decades, finally entered a political document: »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: 1.4).

On the other hand, since mass higher education has emerged numerous writers have been stressing that academic institutions should be *responsive to society*.

This is absolutely correct yet it is only half of the truth. Precisely for the multiple roles they play in culture and society, today's academic institutions should not only be *responsive* (*receptive*) but also *responsible* (i.e. *pro-active*): »while *responding* to society's needs and demands, universities have also to assume a crucial *responsibility* towards society. […] The great difference between being responsive and being responsible lies in the fact that in the first case, universities should be receptive to what society expect from them; in the second case, they should have an ambition to guide reflection and policy-making in society. While universities excel at making new discoveries in all disciplines of science and technology, they must also scrutinize systemically the trends that might affect soon or later the well being of populations, and, if necessary, raise criticism, issue alarm signals and make recommendations« (Weber, 2002: 62-63).

These issues will be examined in more detail later; yet, there is a question to be answered here. Universities do not exist just for some 'external purposes'; they are (also) a legitimate place to critically reflect them. Further, reflecting changes in higher education, coping with the challenges of mass higher education, taking part with other institutions in policy analysis and acting with stakeholders – this is all part of their mission. Higher education has become a recognised field of research because it is an equally important area for 'external society' as it is for academic institutions themselves. Academics should also deploy their own intellectual resources to take stock of the modern changes seen in higher education.

When analysing contemporary changes in British higher education, Gordon Graham, a professor at the University of Aberdeen, makes an interesting critical note on the academic protests seen in the UK in the 1980s and concludes with some serious, radical questions. He distinguishes two sources for their »mixed and muted« reactions: »First, there was serious anxiety, one might almost say panic, about how to cope with the end of regime in which their jobs were secure and the flow of resources to support them seemingly unlimited. Second, there was deep uncertainty about what exactly it was that they could say in their own defence. What *were* universities for? Why *should* society at large value them? Was there not *something* to be said for radical revision and review?« (Graham, 2002: 17).

Other questions can also be found in the fundamentals of contemporary higher education policy. Below, we will not so much tackle these fundamental questions but rather the formation of contemporary higher education policy and

some of the most interesting questions relating to current trends in European higher education.

Internationalisation in higher education and European integrations

A review of the past few decades shows that the expanding tertiary education sector – in particular the democratising and liberalising of access[11] – has put the need for systemic reforms firmly on national and institutional agendas. A few years ago the Eurydice network produced a very useful study of reforms in European higher education in the 1980s and 1990s (Eurydice, 2000) which provides an insight into these processes at an international level and which we will also draw upon here.

This comparative study allows an insight into systemic changes among the reviewed 18 European countries. In all countries, policy and legislative activities were particularly condensed at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s. They show »a large number of convergent trends in higher education« among individual countries but the study states that »there is no evidence that these developments were the result of a concerted approach between participating countries. The convergent education policies seem more likely to be a by-product of the economic and social policies which, in the context of European integration, underwent a deliberate harmonisation process« (Eurydice, 2000: 174).

This statement seems a little surprising from today's point of view: the convergent education policies are just a by-product! Within the EU action *Education and Training 2010* »an open method of co-ordination« ('OMC') was established (see Commission, 2001: 14)[12], also in the field of (higher) education or more broadly within the 46 countries of the *Bologna Process,* »a concerted approach between participating countries« which today seems to be a normal method of working. However, we should not forget that this is quite a recent achievement and hence also a result of coping with the challenges of mass higher education as well as international trends in higher education.

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[11] The increased output from upper-secondary education as well as the opening up of higher education to previously under-represented (social, age, gender etc.) groups and non-traditional and vocational qualifications prove that profound changes have been put in place not only in higher education: education systems as a whole have undergone substantial changes. However, this is not a central question here.

[12] The OMC originates in the Lisbon EC Presidency Conclusions of 2000 (par. 37); it is »inspired by economic policy co-ordination« between the Member States and »on one hand […] provides orientation towards common outcomes or objectives in a given policy area; on the other, [it] is an instrument for identifying good policy practice from among the grand reservoir of diverse policy approaches in the European area« (Commission, 2005a: 23).

In the perception of many generations European universities have predominantly been national universities. Yet, the *national university* was a product of the 19th century. By then the national governance of higher education institutions had been set up: the *national systems* of higher education had commenced to be established and the differences between them started to increase. However, due to the universal character of science and culture as well as centuries-long academic traditions certain compatible elements persisted in the otherwise increasingly 'incompatible' national systems. Universities continued to co-operate in the given circumstances and to the given extent and students still went to study abroad but both institutions and individuals encountered many obstacles for either economic or ideological reasons (or both).

After awakening from the disasters of the two world wars, in Europe the idea of lowering borders and reintegrating the continent acquired firm grounds. In half a century it totally changed its previous physiognomy. It is not the place here to make value judgments or continue the old philosophical debate on 'historical progress'. Yet it is important to establish that political openness and economic co-operation have also produced many incentives for higher education. Since the post-Second World War period, universities have not only been challenged by *mass higher education* but also by *rapid internationalisation*. This second challenge was important for at least two reasons: on one hand, to enable comparisons of the various advantages and disadvantages of individual systems as well as systemic responses and policy practices and, on the other, to become truly aware of the numerous obstacles to international academic co-operation and mobility and to strive for improvements.

Still, policy and legislative activities and measures remained within relatively closed national frameworks at least up until the late 1980s. Within international co-operation frameworks, education has been often regarded with certain caution, even jealousy, as 'a national affair'. Against these attitudes, the late 1980s brought some new and convincing arguments from the 'outside' (»economic and social policies«, as the Eurydice study says, and even more). Several different factors – the globalisation of markets and economies, political shifts and integration processes within Europe and globally, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the free movement of people, growing multiculturalism etc. – accumulated and influenced governments to also start *intergovernmental and international discussions on education policies*.

The emerging new reality, fractionating and interlinking of various horizons[13] has started to argue *against the incompatibilities* of national (higher) education systems. As a result, informal and formal international forums dealing with policy issues have been formed aiming for the first time at »a concerted approach between participating countries«. Since it seemed before that the development of national education could only be possible if 'pure' national needs and circumstances are taken into account, the new reality has led to the realisation that – for the sake of national progress – supranational or international dimensions should also be seriously taken into higher education policy considerations.

Nevertheless, education was left for a long time outside or at least on the margins of European integration. Community action programmes in (higher) education date back to 1976 but they were relatively sporadic. The second half of the 1980s brought action programmes for research and student mobility: today's well-known *Erasmus* programme was launched in 1987 and, parallel to it, the *European Credit Transfer System* (ECTS) was created[14] to facilitate mobility and the recognition of short periods of study within the institutions and countries involved. With the political changes seen in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s similar programmes – the best known is the *Tempus* programme – have been established for the much broader (not only European) area. The EU also offered the forum needed to discuss the development of higher education in a new, supranational context.[15] However, a much more important novelty for the promotion and development of the internationalisation of higher education as well as of higher education policy was introduced by the *EU Treaty* in the early 1990s.

On the highest formal level, the *Maastricht Treaty* (formally the *Treaty on European Union*; signed in February 1992) recognised for the first time the European Community's responsibility to promote co-operation in education

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[13] These factors should not be observed as being linear, simply accumulating energy for a change. They can be fragmented, with different intensities and different time-schedules in different regions, even contradicting. Taken all together in their heterogeneity they represent the context and levers of historical changes.

[14] The ECTS was originally created for the 1989-1995 period and limited to five subject areas. After receiving good responses, it was extended to new subject areas and prolonged in 1995. Since the Bologna Declaration (1999) it has been an international tool in European higher education with a growing reputation.

[15] The *Memorandum on Higher Education in EC* (1991) is an early result of these discussions; it already pointed out: »The challenge of science and technology is central to European competitiveness and economic progress and requires that Europe is in the forefront, not merely in the generation of new knowledge, but also in its dissemination and application to economic life. Science and technology will also be interacting more strongly with the cultural, social and human aspects of daily living, bringing new opportunities and constraints and fostering many innovative approaches in society. […] The developed economies of Europe must strive to follow high skill strategies in order to increase the flexibility and productivity of their industries« (Commission, 1991: 3).

between European countries. The 1992 stipulation was repeated in the *Amsterdam Treaty* of 1999 without any substantial change.[16] According to this provision, the Community »shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation 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 organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.« The provision also stresses that incentive measures will be adopted at the 'supranational level' but »excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States« (Treaty, 1992). A similar provision involved vocational education and training.

Thus, education in the EU is mainly a forum for the exchange of ideas and good practices; its role is not to create a common (only one; supranational) education policy but to create a system of co-operation between the EU Member States (OMC; see note 12). Education remains a primary government concern (the subsidiarity principle); the Member States preserve their rights in terms of the content and organisation of education and training systems. However, Community action programmes in particular are an important lever working towards *the European dimension in (higher) education* and the co-ordination activities actually acting in the direction of a 'soft harmonisation'. Since the EU has been enlarged and its action programmes in education and training have also been opened – under certain conditions – to non-member countries, the 'EU forum's' effect of discussions and actions on policy development in various parts of today's Europe has increased.

Another forum for higher education policy and common activities has been provided by *international organisations*; the preparation and signing of the *Lisbon Recognition Convention* (1992-1997) as an influential project has already been mentioned.[17] The role of organisations like the OECD and the World Bank has also started to strengthen and taken on new dimensions in various parts of Europe and globally. On the other side, some influential *regional initiatives* have also been launched which have strengthened the mobility of students and teachers but also helped in 'concerting' education policies: *Nordplus* (Nordic countries, 1988),

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[16] See *Treaty*, 1992, Articles 126 and 127; *Treaty*, 1999, Articles 149 and 150. The essence of these provisions was also preserved in the draft EU Constitution of 2003; comp. *Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe*. Adopted by consensus by the European Convention on 13 June and 10 July 2003. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2003: 174-176 (Articles III/182-III/183).

[17] *The Lisbon Recognition Convention* has always found echoes in the Bologna documents starting with the *Sorbonne Declaration* (1998): »The convention set a number of basic requirements [on recognition] and acknowledged that individual countries could engage in an even more constructive scheme«.

Pushing Back the Borders (the Netherlands, Flemish Community of Belgium and three German *Länder,* 1991), *Ceepus* (Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies, 1993) etc.

The Bologna Process as the most important international forum aiming at the development and 'concerting' of higher education policies among European countries was launched precisely within this context and after many years of political debates on 'Universities and the Europe of Knowledge' (see Corbett, 2005). The original initiative, the *Sorbonne Declaration* of 1998, was a joint statement of only four Ministers of Education (from France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom) aimed at the »harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system«. It stated that »Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge as well« and called »on other Member States of the Union and other European countries to join us in this objective« (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998).

In fact, not many countries accepted this call; on the contrary, it provoked from today's point of view a relatively strange dispute over the term '*harmonisation*'.[18] It seems that its context was confounded – deliberately or not, that can remain a question – by the 'excluded harmonisation' of Article 126 of the *Maastricht Treaty*. Finally, a new ministerial meeting of the by then altogether 29 countries was organised and in June 1999 the *Bologna Declaration* was signed, avoiding such disputable terms and issues and launching the broadest international higher education policy development forum so far. Today, 46 countries are already participating. Since the 2001 Prague Conference, the European Commission has been a full member of the Bologna follow-up group and the Council of Europe is its consultative member.

The Bologna Process was from the very beginning an inter-ministerial initiative but over the years international political organisations and academic associations have acquired an increasingly important position within it. Indeed, the initiative would be particularly sterile if academic representatives had not been

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[18] The French Minister of that time Claude Allègre reacted to these disputes, e.g.: »For this reason, we took the initiative last year […] in holding the Sorbonne meeting on European "harmonisation". Yet I became aware that some people in Europe did not understand what this expression meant. "Harmony" is the guiding principle of the orchestra [*finalité de l'orchestre*] some of whose members play the drum, others the trumpet and yet others, the piano or violin. To each, his or her instrument and differing musical score, yet with "harmony" the end result. As I see it, Europe is like such an orchestra. […] We have no wish, any of us, to lose our identity. In each country, the education system has often been the product of major struggles. […] For this reason, any attempt to "manufacture" Europe by gutting individual nations should be rejected. Neither is "convergence" an ideal term either because, in physics or mathematics in particular, it implies that, at a certain point in time, uniformity is reached« – *Discours de Claude Allègre au 40e anniversaire de la conférence des recteurs européens*. Bordeaux, 20 et 21 mai 1999; http://www. education. gouv.fr/realisations/education/superieur/cre.htm (accessed 20 October 2004).

invited to join in from the beginning. Rectors from many European universities participated at the Bologna Conference in June 1999 and their presence was in a way symbolic. Eleven years before, in 1988, the old Bologna University hosted another important conference: at this conference, rectors from numerous European universities adopted the *Magna Charta Universitatum*.[19] This was an early and highly influential contribution from the academic side to all those initiatives and ideas which finally, ten years later, flowed together to create the Bologna Process.

In political terms, the Bologna Process is clearly a success. It has become the broadest policy forum on higher education so far. As an inter-ministerial forum of the original EU Member States and associated countries it has found ways to define responsibilities between Member States and the Commission (»excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations«; see note 72) as well as to broaden its membership far beyond the 'EU external borders' to encompass today's 46 European countries. It has avoided the centralisation of its follow-up structures and has not been bureaucratised. It has also found ways to attract various consultative members who have taken up their responsibilities very actively. The 'Bologna agenda' would simply be unfeasible if the representatives of academic institutions and students were not treated equally as partners at the roundtable where the representatives of employers and trade unions as well as QA agencies also found a place at the third landmark, namely the Bergen Conference.[20]

Is this still an inter-ministerial forum? The Bologna Process will surely have a lot to do until 2010 and beyond. On one hand, the inter-ministerial forum at the present stage seems to need an upgrade to become an inter-governmental forum

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[19] The Magna Charta was adopted to stress the importance of autonomy as a traditional academic value for universities in the new age. Upon this opportunity, the Rector Magnificus of Bologna University said in his speech: »In the name of the unity of culture the needs for supranationality of Universities could once more confront the difficulties ensuing from the birth of national States and nationalisms. […] For sure one does not strive for the uniformity of statutes and structures, but for possibility to exchange views in all directions thanks to general and convinced acceptance of principles. […] The society into which this new University has to integrate itself is the advanced industrial society of our time: a society based on the rapidity of exchanges and information and on the mobility of men and things. It would be a serious mistake if the University, in this new society, decided to withdraw into itself, into its pride of academic corporation« (Magna Charta, 1991: 11-13).

[20] European academic associations are an important part of the so-called formal 'Bologna structures'. The European University Association ('EUA'), the European Association of Institutions of Higher Education ('EURASHE') and the National Unions of Students in Europe ('ESIB'); the European Students' Union – ('ESU') since 2007) have been 'consultative members' of the inter-ministerial forum since the first landmark – the Prague Conference (2001), together with the Council of Europe. Consultative members were broadened first at the Berlin conference (2003) with the Unesco European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES) and then at the Bergen conference (2005) with the Education International ('EI') Pan-European Structure, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ('ENQA'), and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe ('UNICE'). At the last conference in London in May 2007 the list of consultative members was not extended any more.

for the sake of efficiency[21] while, on the other, it seems that implementation of the newly agreed common higher education policy (aiming at establishing the EHEA) could suffer from the lack of more binding tools and structures.[22] Yet this issue will be left for further discussion. Here it is important to turn to 'the contents': to some important issues of contemporary higher education which have been approached and discussed within the Bologna Process and which have already brought the first results, first of all, some 'concerted' proposals concerning a common structure (a system of easily readable and comparable degrees) and co-operation in quality assurance.

Towards comparable degree structures and an 'overarching qualifications framework'

To summarise: there are two main driving forces of the fundaments of contemporary higher education policies – on one hand the phenomenon of *mass higher education* and the *internationalisation of higher education* on the other. Since the 1960s higher education systems have been constantly expanding and internationalising. In combination with a broader economic and political agenda, these trends have raised the question of the *efficiency of higher education systems* in quantitative (resources etc.) and qualitative (qualifications, academic output etc.) terms. This is the real background which has been dominating national policy developments and pushing them, at a later stage, towards the *processes of international 'concerting'*. There is logic in these trends.

At a certain stage, the increased volume of teaching and research at higher education institutions started to raise questions of the efficiency of higher education. Even in those countries which had been treating the higher education sector relatively generously, the overall political and economic situation in the 1980s started to press towards the lowering of costs and greater efficiency and led to stricter controls on public spending as well as reductions in public spending. Since the volume and quality of higher education provision should not be

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[21] Some important issues raised in the Bologna Process are at least partly outside the direct responsibilities of the ministers of education; e.g. financing, the labour market, visa policy for foreigners etc.

[22] The 'open method of co-ordination' is in a certain way also a working method within the Bologna Process. Therefore, some criticisms of Wim Kok's report can also be applied here, particularly with regard to the process of the 'Bologna stocktaking' which was executed for the first time at the Bergen Conference: »The open method of coordination has fallen far short of expectations. If Member States do not enter the spirit of mutual benchmarking, little or nothing happens. […] If governments do not show commitment to implementation nationally, this remains a huge problem. […] The central elements of the open method of coordination – peer pressure and benchmarking – are clear incentives for the Member States to deliver on their commitments by measuring and comparing their respective performance and facilitating exchange of best practice« (Kok, 2004: 42).

reduced (but rather increased) measures for reforming *education structures* and *governance* of the system and institutions as well as *quality assessment* have started to appear in national policy directions.

On the other hand, the general context of international economic co-operation and political integrations has strengthened the *mobility* of students and graduates as well as teachers and researchers. Further, the enhanced academic mobility started to challenge existing standards and procedures for the *recognition of qualifications*. To seriously further strengthen mobility it became necessary for countries to adopt new supra-national regulations on recognition[23] and to start developing more comparable structures in their education systems. The growing need to develop new structures was also easily understood as a lever of innovation and productivity within the international context.[24] Comparable degree structures as a 'formal' lever could have a major effect of facilitating mobility but not without a 'content' lever: mutual trust in the quality provisions of the various national systems and for that reason the need for quality assurance measures. Thus, questions of the governance of higher education, particularly the *qualifications framework* and *quality assessment*, proved not only to be key national policy issues but they entered supra-national policy discussions and remain at that level up until today.

Let us first focus on the emerging *comparable structures*. It is a notorious fact that European higher education systems have been characterised by a high degree of diversity. One possible approach to this diversity is to differentiate between 'short' and 'long' courses. »In 1980, university degree courses in many European countries lasted a minimum of five years and were often highly academic. The lack of intermediate qualifications meant that students who did not complete a course, or pass their final exams, were left without any recognition of their

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[23] The drafting and adoption of the *Lisbon Recognition Convention* was already mentioned; by the time of the Bergen Conference »36 of the 45 participating countries« (Bergen communiqué, 2005) and by the time of the London Conference »38 members of the Bologna Process, including Montenegro« (London communiqué, 2007) had ratified it. Prior to the *Lisbon Convention*, the adoption of the *European Council Directive 89/48/EEC* regarding a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas awarded on the completion of professional education and training is another landmark of the highest importance in this area but is related to EU-27 Members States only.

[24] In this light, the *Memorandum on Higher Education in EC* already contained some accents and questions which are well-known today: »The [European higher education] systems are characterised by a high degree of diversity. […] With the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, the mobility of labour and the development of a European labour market, are we beginning to witness the emergence of a "European" expectation by employers of future employees? As European opportunities become available these will very likely demand a "European" education, or at least one with a significant "European" content. […] The critical question is whether this huge, diverse system can be given a European focus in order to realise Community objectives […]. Can these systems together establish and maintain supremacy in research, produce the graduates who will have mastered the requirements for managing technological innovation […]? This is an ambitious, but a necessary prospect« (Commission, 1991: 14).

years of study« (Eurydice, 2000: 144-145). At an advanced stage of mass higher education, policy measures aimed at lowering costs and a greater outcome *had* to address efficiency, e.g. the problem of higher education dropouts.[25]

In times of mass higher education the old education structures have become counter-productive. The abandonment of 'long' courses and development of two successive 'shorter' ones, also supported by successful examples from abroad, the modularisation of courses and more flexible provision for the transition between courses appeared as fairly early policy responses to the problems that were encountered. Thus, the initial pressure leading towards a *two-tier structure* (today usually identified as the basis for international comparability) did not come primarily from internationalisation; it was caused by the problems of establishing mass higher education at the national level: »Efficiency is a common reason behind the restructuring of degree courses into distinct cycles and the shortening of the time required to obtain a first degree«[26] (Eurydice, 2000: 172).

In the majority of European countries, the trend towards shorter initial university degree courses giving access to the next level ran parallel to the development of the non-university sector with a pronounced vocational orientation.[27] With the increase in student numbers two somewhat opposite trends appeared: on one side, a limitation on the number of places in expensive, professional and practically-based university courses as well as dividing them up into successive 'shorter' ones; on the other hand, the expansion of places in new vocationally-oriented courses in the non-university sector as well as their upgrading and lengthening to two- or three-year courses. In formal terms, they »have led to similar first degree structures in both sectors« (Eurydice, 2000: 176) and the question of transition from one sector to another arose.

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[25] Dropouts are clearly a hot issue in all education systems; however, for systemic, cultural, personal etc. reasons it is very difficult to measure the phenomenon and identify the exact numbers involved. »Dropout from specific courses is not necessarily a good measure of non-completion of higher education as students may chose to repeat the year, re-sit their exams or transfer to another course which they subsequently complete successfully. Since few countries, however, are able to monitor students throughout their higher education careers, alternative figures are scarce« (Eurydice, 2000: 120).

[26] »The major reason for change in the structure and content of higher education courses during the period considered was the increase in the number of entrants to higher education« (Eurydice, 2000: 133). Several countries in the West introduced shorter first-cycle courses with intermediate level of qualifications already in the early 1990s or at least prior to signing the Bologna Declaration. Denmark introduced the so-called 3+2+3 structure dividing university programmes in three cycles already in 1993. Similarly, shorter courses were introduced in France (1992/93), Finland (1994-97), the Netherlands (1996), Italy (1997) and Germany (1998).

[27] Some figures on the non-university sector today: »The sector of Tertiary Short Cycle or sub-degree education in Europe represents post-secondary education more than 2,5 million students (1,7 million in TSC and over 800.000 in post-secondary education)« (Kirsh et al., 2003: 4).

This again implies a question of *comparability* – this time as an 'internal' systemic issue, not as an issue of internationalisation – as well as various questions of '*quality*' (these questions are not necessarily only about the 'genuine quality' of the – in some views 'ossified', 'non-responsive' – university sector). Confronted by the new trends,[28] universities have often started to meet the needs of students who consider higher education as preparation for their entry to the job market rather than the basis for a traditional academic profession or a research career. Thus, the inherited hierarchy of disciplines has changed and important novelties have also been introduced in learning structures and teaching. The awareness of lifelong learning in higher education, the use of ICT etc. are no less important for the renewal of higher education today than the formal structural changes.

Thus, reforms leading towards the 'internal' as well as 'external' comparability of higher education systems and towards diversified but quality higher education provision were largely recognised as the key policy issues. Higher education has taken on a visible position on general policy agendas. It has also become ever more clear that governments can treat this issue much more effectively if they work together; for the sake of effectiveness and considering the issues of global competition in higher education they *have* to work together, hand in hand with the academic community and other stakeholders.

The change to the degree structure or, put better, the »adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees« is often understood as the essence of the Bologna Process (that is, its 'structural dimension').[29] Yet the Bologna Conference in 1999 codified just a very general idea »of a system essentially based on two main cycles« and added: »The achievement of greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education nevertheless requires continual momentum in order to be fully accomplished. We need to support it through promoting concrete measures to achieve tangible forward steps« (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

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[28] These trends include developments in the non-university sector and are closely connected with calls for the greater *flexibility* of the tertiary education system: »many countries have made changes aimed at increasing flexibility and choice in higher education courses and at facilitating mobility between study courses and higher education sectors. These have included splitting course programmes into smaller units on a semester term or module basis and the introduction of credits. Such sub-division of courses increases student choice and facilitates inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional movement, including mobility between the non-university and university sectors and between different countries. The pioneers of such changes were the open universities« (Eurydice, 2000: 146).

[29] In the Bologna Process the distinction between its *'structural'* and *'social dimension'* has been recognised to stress the relationship between reforming systemic tools and their social effects as well as preconditions (e.g. values). See e.g. Zgaga, 2003: 154-167; Zgaga, 2005: 107-115.

Various surveys and monitoring reports have documented many »tangible forward steps«. In 1999, the *Trends I* report could only ascertain that »*the survey of existing structures* shows the extreme complexity and diversity of curricular and degree structures« and that »*no significant convergence towards a 3-5-8 model was found*« (Haug, Kirstein, Knudsen, 1999: 7). In the next stage, *Trends II* stated that »in a number of countries the Bologna Declaration clearly seems to have influenced the introduction of a two-tier system« (Haug, Tauch, 2001: 54). Further, »two years later, the reform train is gathering steam and speed almost everywhere in Europe« but it was also realised that »the mere act of introducing a two-tier degree structure can only be a very first step toward a transparent system of degrees« (Reichert, Tauch, 2003: 45). Finally, ministers at the Berlin Conference were pleased to note that »a comprehensive restructuring of higher education is now under way« and encouraged »the [m]ember States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile«. They also undertook »to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area« (Berlin Communiqué, 2003).

The idea of a *framework for qualifications of the EHEA* was one of the key points on the Bologna agenda during the 2003-2005 period. A special working group was formed to discuss these issues in detail and to prepare a comprehensive document (A Framework…, 2005) to be submitted to ministers at the Bergen Conference. After noting »with satisfaction that the two-cycle degree system is being implemented on a large scale«[30] this document received clear support from the ministers: »We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. We commit ourselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010, and to having started work on this by 2007. We ask the Follow-up Group to report on the implementation and further development of the overarching framework« (Bergen Communiqué, 2005).

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[30] This estimation is based on various background surveys. E.g., *Trends IV* stated that »almost all countries have by now introduced the two-cycle system« (Reichert, Tauch, 2005: 11) while the Working Group on Stocktaking was sure that »it is safe to predict that the objectives of this action line [degree system] will be achieved by 2010« (Bologna Process Stocktaking, 2005: 42).

Despite the optimism revealed in this paragraph, implementation of the idea of national qualification frameworks seems to be a demanding enterprise at the policy level. The *Trends IV* report, which was presented at the Bergen Conference, pointed out that already the *Berlin Communiqué* »had called for the elaboration of national qualification frameworks but little progress has been in most countries« (Reichert, Tauch, 2005: 17). Two years later, »the results of the *Trends V* report and the reports from Rectors' Conferences show that, so far, national qualification frameworks have not been adopted or implemented except in a very few countries, and even when they exist, many institutions as well as citizens are unaware of them« (Crossier, Purser, Smidt, 2007: 68). Further, as the main finding in the survey *Trends V* stressed »institutions are currently either unaware of this issue or confused by it«.[31]

In the conclusions of the chapter, the *Trends V* report ascertained that »[n]ational qualification frameworks are currently an aspirational rather than an actual tool for most systems« and recommended: »To be effective, they should be designed coherently with broad societal consultation and strong involvement of higher education institutions« (pp. 69-70).

Despite all these problems, *A Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA*[32] adopted in Bergen in 2005 marks an important landmark within contemporary European higher education. It elaborated the 'structural dimension' of the Bologna Process that was sketched in the *Bologna Declaration* only on a very general level, systematically and extensively.[33] Several ideas born and developed in discus-

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[31] As part of this confusion, *Trends V* mentioned existing systems of classification of qualifications which »may be confused with NQFs, even though the purpose of the new-type qualification frameworks is to overcome barriers rather than to underline them« (ibid.). In this line, Ministers of Education at their last meeting in London emphasised »that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability« (London Communiqué, 2007: 2.8).
Another part of the confusion was probably produced by the parallel development of the 'Bologna' and 'Lisbon' (or perhaps 'Brussels') overarching frameworks of qualifications. Soon after the Bergen conference, the European Commission launched a discussion on a Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (Commission, 2005c) which differed in some important points from the framework adopted in Bergen. This issue had been a topic of serious work after Bergen and in London the ministers were » satisfied that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA will also be compatible with the proposal from the European Commission on a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning« (London Communiqué, 2007: 2.9).

[32] A definition: »*Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area:* an overarching framework that makes transparent the relationship between European national higher education frameworks of qualifications and the qualifications they contain. It is an articulation mechanism between national frameworks« (A Framework…, 2005: 29).

[33] In relation to »a system essentially based on two main cycles« (Bologna Declaration, 2005), *A Framework* elaborated cycles in details and proposed »guidelines for the association of credits with qualifications within national frameworks:
> Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) qualifications may typically include […] by 120 ECTS credits;
> First cycle qualifications may typically include […] by 180-240 ECTS credits;

sions over the last decade and even before are interrelated and synthesised. First of all, 'the overarching structure' as a kind of 'common denominator' is important for making the relationship between the different higher education qualifications including the concrete results of national systems in Europe transparent (»easy readable« as it says in the *Bologna Declaration*) and contributes substantially to their compatibility. Sooner or later, this effect should improve the recognition of qualifications achieved in different national or institutional contexts but also encourage mobility and ease various problems in this sector.

On the basis of the framework for EHEA, the further development of national frameworks has been foreseen. Initial problems regarding their development and implementation should not be underestimated, but there are good reasons to expect that they will be resolved in one or another way. A national framework is not only important 'externally', that is as an 'interface' between the different national systems within Europe, but also 'internally': qualifications frameworks strengthen the internal coherence and logic of each particular national higher education system. Last but not least, the »Qualifications frameworks help provide the basis for confidence […] within trans- and inter-national context«[34] (A Framework…, 2005: 77). They provide the context for effective quality assurance.

> Second cycle qualifications may typically include […] by 90-120 ECTS credits – the minimum requirement should amount to 60 credits at second cycle level;
> Third cycle qualifications do not necessarily have credits associated with them« (A Framework…, 2005: 71-72). Thus, the early (Sorbonne) idea of a strict 3-5-8 structure acquired much more flexible, developed and feasible features.

[34] »We see the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, which we agreed in Bergen, as a central element of the promotion of European higher education in a global context« (London Communiqué, 2007: 2.10).

CHAPTER 2

Reconsidering quality: efficiency vs. confidence

Now we should turn to issues concerning *quality assurance*. From the very beginning, the Bologna Process has also put high on its agenda the »promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies« (*Bologna Declaration*, 1999). The development of this 'line of action' has been particularly long and demanding. In some countries, the idea of quality assurance started to spread to higher education from the economy relatively early on, already in the 1970s, and by »1997, all countries participating in this study, except the French Community of Belgium, had introduced some form of nationally (in German at *Land* level) defined quality assessment system« (Eurydice, 2000: 177).

The Eurydice study shows an obvious increase in policy and legislative activities among the countries under review at the end of 1980s and in the 1990s; »the major focus of legislation and policy was the management and control of higher education institutions and in particular the financing of such institutions« (Eurydice, 2000: 33). Up until today, these issues have not appeared much in documents adopted by international forums (such as the Bologna Process): it seems they are 'the core' of the national education systems and, as such, they were 'marked' for a long time by the particularities of national discourses. However, the extensive reference to international experience, 'learning from good practices' and spontaneous 'concerting' towards common patterns can also be observed here.

Towards an evaluation of curricula not 'biased by national stakes'?

As mentioned, the economic and political circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s – characterised by pressures to reduce public funds as well as by an expand-

ing tertiary education sector – dictated questions of the so-called effectiveness in education. Various methods of quality control, quality assessment, quality assurance etc. ('QA methods') were borrowed from the economic sector and gradually transferred to the tertiary education sector in modified forms. It is impossible to overlook that individual countries were introducing QA methods in their respective legislation parallel to changing provisions on management and financing. However, the implementation of QA methods had to respect certain specific features of the academic environment, which clearly differs from the economic sector. One of the most important features is linked to the principle of academic autonomy and related to changes in higher education governance.[35]

With few exceptions, European higher education systems have traditionally been very influenced by the state. Since the 1980s this role has started to change: the state has been withdrawing from direct institutional governance. The state's influence started to be restricted to setting general higher education objectives – structures and qualifications – that is, to higher education *output* (graduates, their employability etc.) and not to the *process*. As a rule, legislative provisions redirected funds allocated to institutions strictly according to budget lines (salaries, equipment, maintenance etc.) to the allocation of block grants aimed at increasing autonomy in its 'financial dimension'.[36] This is the conceptual turn – a move away from the traditional »*interventionary*« towards the new »*facilitatory* state« (Neave and Van Vught, 1991) – which is the most characteristic feature of the policy and legislative changes of the 1980s and 1990s and still retains some relevance today. Institutions got more autonomy but they became more accountable:[37] they are bound to the more efficient use of public funds and encouraged to seek alternative sources and to be more open to the economy and society. A special tool for and proof of institutional accountability has been given by developing and implementing the QA methods in higher education.

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[35] Universities in the contemporary 'age of commercialisation' need changes in their governance to strengthen their autonomy, not to weaken it. The *internal quality culture* is particularly important for the issues discussed here. We will return this issue at the end of this chapter.

[36] »The granting of greater autonomy to institutions, particularly in institutional governance, budget spending and course planning was intended to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit and thus promote efficiency, cost-effectiveness, flexibility and quality in educational provision. At the same time, institutions were encouraged to seek additional funding through bids for governmental contracts and the sale of their research and teaching services« (Eurydice, 2000: 177).

[37] In *Trends I* Guy Haug noted that »[i]n many countries, there has been a marked movement towards a greater autonomy of universities, and in some cases of other institutions of higher education. […] At the same time, this movement has been accompanied by the inception of new, more stringent or more detailed procedures for quality assurance and evaluation« (Haug, Kirstein, Knudsen, 1999: 17).

A preliminary result of national developments in this area was the *extreme variety of QA provisions at the beginning of the 1990s*; it seems this variety was even larger than in the case of qualification and degree structures. Interestingly, the issue of quality assurance was not yet an item on the agenda of the *Memorandum on Higher Education in the EC* (Commission, 1991) at all. However, the spirit of European co-operation in higher education, well supported during this period by EU Member States and positively influencing the broader European context as well, sparked discussions among countries even in this area.

An early EU document stressing quality assessment in higher education was only adopted in late 1991: »Improving the quality of teaching in higher education is a concern shared by each Member State and by every institution of higher education within the European Communities. The increasing importance of the European dimension in general and more particularly the introduction of a single market will widen the range of interested parties concerned with quality in higher education in each Member State.« Encountering the diversity – or absence in some national systems – of methods used for quality assessment at the national level, the document also stated: »It would accordingly be useful for the methods at present used in the Member States for quality assessment in higher education to be investigated in a comparative study« (Conclusions of the Council…, 1991).

This was an encouraging confirmation of novelties already introduced in some countries and an incentive for countries which were then still considering QA measures. Two lessons can be learnt here:

(1) in an age of mass higher education and its internationalisation QA standards and procedures are necessary systemic elements for improving the functioning of the whole national system and its connection with other national systems;[38] and

(2) if there is an incompatible variety of QA models across Europe then they do not contribute to the necessary confidence.

Yet mutual trust is a psychological cornerstone of the success of reforms in all countries aimed at improving higher education through co-operation and open systems.

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[38] This is not only an 'external' demand from society; it is also a demand from the internal nature of the modern university: »The university's reputation for scholarly integrity could well be the most costly casualty of all. A democratic society needs information about important questions that people can rely upon as reasonable objective and impartial. Universities have long been one of the principal sources of expert knowledge and informed opinion […]. Once the public begins to lose confidence in the objectivity of professors, the consequences extend far beyond the academic community« (Bok, 2005: 117-118).

We again note the logic of the process: the growing number of students and limited resources launched *a debate on the effectiveness* of higher education. Sooner or later, this issue was approached on national levels via thorough *reforms of financing and management* as well as the preparation of *new qualifications structures*. While financing issues could remain to a certain degree 'behind national fences',[39] the changing of qualifications structures (or frameworks) necessarily had to involve international 'concerting'. In principle, compatibility can only be achieved if diverse elements are restructured on similar (agreed) grounds. However, the declared compatibility of structures is not enough for trust; there should also be evidence about quality provision based on transparent – now, why not also compatible – quality standards and procedures. *Not only structures* (i.e. qualification frameworks) *but also quality standards and procedures should be 'concerted'*. And this has again been a hot potato: another call for 'harmonisation'.

During the 1980s and partly the 1990s, quality concerns were only sporadically a real theme in international discussions (we leave to one side the countless general claims which could often be heard that 'quality is important'). Nevertheless and as we saw, a growing number of countries in Western Europe already implemented QA systems at that time; however, in an extreme variety of forms. At least inside the EU – confronted with the enlargement process – it became necessary to reflect on these developments and to decide on further steps. Indeed, two steps were taken at the end of the 1990s with important consequences: the new EU *Recommendation on European co-operation in quality assurance in higher education*[40] was adopted (September 1998) and the *European Network of Quality Agencies*

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[39] To a certain degree: so far these issues have not entered one single supra- or inter-national political document – if we ignore statements like »[w]e recognize the need for sustainable funding of institutions« (Bergen Communiqué, 2005) or »[o]ur aim is to ensure that our HEIs have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes« (London Communiqué, 2007). However, as these issues are in the midst of contemporary discussions on higher education and pushed forward by similar vehicles in all countries, we can also observe a spontaneous international trend in this area similar to changes in degree structures in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
Within the EU this issue has been approached more straightforwardly, in particular bearing in mind the Commission's recent proposal that »the EU should also aim, within a decade, to devote at least 2% of GDP (including both public and private funding) to a modernised higher education sector« and to »reduce the funding gap and make funding work more effectively in education and research« (Commission, 2006a: 7-8).

[40] The EU Council recommended that Member States support and, where necessary, establish transparent quality assurance systems, to base systems of quality assurance on some common features, to encourage higher education institutions to take appropriate follow-up measures, to promote co-operation between the authorities responsible for quality assessment or quality assurance in higher education and promote networking etc. Another recommendation was »that the Commission, in close co-operation with the Member States and on the basis of existing programmes and subject to their objectives and normal open and transparent procedures, encourage the co-operation referred to in point I.E between the authorities responsible for quality assessment and quality assurance in higher education, also involving organisations and associations of higher education institutions with a European remit and the necessary experience in quality assessment and quality assurance« (Council…, 1998).

(ENQA) was established.[41] These discussions influenced, at least indirectly, the drafting of the *Bologna Declaration*.[42] Thus, the issue of quality assurance finally entered the broadest European forum for higher education.

Similarly to the case of implementing a two-tier degree system, the Bologna surveys and monitoring reports give a good insight into further developments in this area. As one might expect, *Trends I* reports that »more and more countries establish external evaluation or quality assurance bodies or agencies« but »the level and scope of the evaluation procedures vary from country to country«[43] (Jette Kirstein in: Haug, Kirstein, Knudsen, 1999: 36). *Trends II* contains a chapter with the eloquent heading »Quality assurance and accreditation: a need for more convergence« (Haug, Tauch, 2001: 42). *Trends III* linked institutional autonomy, quality assurance and accreditation and confirmed »the primacy of the concern with quality as a motor of the Bologna reforms« while at the same time it also stated that the widespread concern for quality »is also the scene of underground and explicit struggles to redefine the respective roles which public authorities, universities and society should play in defining higher education in future« (Reichert, Tauch, 2003: 73). Progress in the area of quality assurance was obviously not as fast as in the area of compatible degree structures. Various interests have been involved.

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[41] The ENQA is a European network to disseminate information, experiences, good practices and new developments in quality assessment and quality assurance in higher education among interested parties: higher education institutions, public authorities and quality assurance agencies. The idea of the network stems from the *European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education*. It was established on the basis of the European Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998, while the *Bologna Declaration* gave it additional momentum one year later. The General Assembly meeting of March 2000 adopted the regulations and action plan; since then the *Network* has figured prominently in discussions about quality issues in the Bologna context. In 2004, the ENQA decided to rename itself the *European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education* but it kept the old abbreviation. At the Bergen Conference (2005), the ENQA joined the consultative members of the Bologna Process (also see note 20).

[42] The *Sorbonne Declaration* does not mention the quality assurance issue. However, it explicitly says: »The international recognition and attractive potential of our systems are directly related to their external and internal readabilities. A system, in which two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, should be recognized for international comparison and equivalence, seems to emerge« (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998).

[43] The sub-chapter on QA and accreditation procedure was written by Jette Kirstein. It also states: »There seems to be a European-wide general trend towards giving higher education institutions more and more institutional autonomy also in matters related to the organisation of studies and the content of programmes. [...] At the same time the increase in the diversification of institutions and qualifications and growing international competition also in relation to higher education seem to further a need at the level of the individual institution to improve information and documentation on the quality and standards of the institution and its qualifications« (Haug, Kirstein, Knudsen, 1999: 36).

On the other hand, Guy Haug discussed »possible ways into the future« in his contribution to *Trends I* and he explicitly mentioned »There is a pressing need to develop another type of evaluation, not based on national systems or institutions, but on subject areas. A missing element in Europe is that institutions do not have independent European bodies to which they could turn for an evaluation of their curricula that would not be biased by national stakes« (p. 21). This was a very clear and far-reaching statement which should today be read again in light of the European Register of QA Agencies.

It was an important step further when ministers at the Berlin Conference agreed that by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include some common elements and agreed on a tricky formulation in which they called upon the »ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005.« In addition, the ministers politically recognised the EUA position on QA with the statement that »the primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework« (Berlin Communiqué, 2003).

Thus, demanding tasks were set for the 2003-2005 period. The ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESIB (now called 'the E4 Group') invested a lot to finally succeed in finding a common language for these issues – also within the BFUG with all members and consultative members involved in the harmonisation process – and submitted a proposal on *Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA* (ENQA, 2005) to the Bergen Ministerial Conference in May 2005.

The 2003-2005 period was also characterised by an increasing focus on QA issues at the institutional level. Thus, the *Trends IV* report noticed that institutional efforts to develop the quality of education, research and services »go far beyond actual internal quality processes and procedures«; Bologna reforms have brought added value to institutions, »in particular enhancing the quality of teaching« (Reichert, Tauch, 2005: 28). On the other hand, the report ascertained that »there are important differences regarding the effect of Bologna reforms on quality« and that »the differences among individual European countries are [still] enormous« (p. 32), in particular in understanding institutional autonomy and accountability in relation to external QA procedures and national accreditation. The report concluded: »The essential aim of the Bologna reforms, namely to create a European Higher Education Area which is predicated on quality and therefore attractive to its members as well as the outside world, can only be achieved if the concern for quality is not reduced to the establishment or optimisation of external quality assurance processes alone, but considers all processes of institutional development« (p. 33).

In Bergen, the ministers turned mostly to 'systemic issues' and noted that the homework set in Berlin had been done: »Almost all countries have made provision for a quality assurance system based on the criteria set out in the Berlin

Communiqué and with a high degree of co-operation and networking«. The ministers also urged »higher education institutions to continue their efforts to enhance the quality of their activities through the systematic introduction of internal mechanisms and their direct correlation to external quality assurance«. For the future – and for setting new homework – the following statement was much more important: »We adopt the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area as proposed by ENQA. We commit ourselves to introducing the proposed model for peer review of quality assurance agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria« (Bergen Communiqué, 2005).

The adopted document on QA contains three main elements which cover institutional and system levels as well as the level of the 'control of the controllers': European standards and guidelines (1) for *internal quality assurance* within higher education institutions; (2) for the *external quality assurance* of higher education; and (3) for *external quality assurance agencies*.[44] The E4 Group stressed these standards and guidelines are not monolithic but aim at broad acceptance and »a general resonance at the national level of most signatory states«: »In the light of [the European] diversity and variety […] the report sets its face against a narrow, prescriptive and highly formulated approach to standards. In both the standards and the guidelines, the report prefers the generic principle to the specific requirement. It does this because […] it will provide a more robust basis for the coming together of the different higher education communities across the EHEA« (ENQA, 2005: 10).

The key achievements of the Bergen Conference are the two EHEA documents it adopted containing common EU-46 'structures': the 'overarching' qualifications framework plus standards and guidelines for QA. These two documents fixed, so to say, 'a point of no return' rather than announcing 'a happy end'. The Bergen 'stage result' will remain a point of determination for further discussions on higher education in Europe until 2010 and most probably beyond 2010.[45]

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[44] An overview of the detailed contents: (1) Institutional policy and procedures for QA; approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards; an assessment of students; QA of teaching staff; learning resources and student support; information system; public information. (2) Use of internal QA procedures; development of external QA procedures; criteria for decisions; process fit for purpose; reporting; follow-up procedures; periodic reviews; system-wide analysis. (3) Use of external QA procedures for higher education; official status; activities; resources; mission statement; independence; external QA criteria and processes used by the agencies; accountability procedures (see ENQA, 2005).

[45] »We will take 2010 as an opportunity to reformulate the vision that motivated us in setting the Bologna Process in motion in 1999 and to make the case for an EHEA underpinned by values and visions that go beyond issues of structures and tools« (London Communiqué, 2007).

In Bergen, there were also some hot topics on the table which were postponed to the next meeting: one of them was a *European register of quality assurance agencies* as proposed by the E4 Group. The ministers' decision was a diplomatic one: they »welcome[d] the principle« and asked »that the practicalities of implementation be further developed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB with a report back to us through the Follow-up Group.« They also underlined »the importance of cooperation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions« (Bergen Communiqué, 2005).

The idea of a register of European QA agencies has a background which originated outside the Bologna club of today (EU-46). To keep the story short, we should only mention that already in October 2004 (i.e. before Bergen) the European Commission had presented a *Proposal for a Recommendation of the Council and of the European Parliament on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education* (Commission, 2004). Under the heading *Five Steps to Achieve Mutual Recognition* this proposal contained some relatively radical ideas with regard to previous QA debates within EU; one included a European register of quality assurance and accreditation agencies (a third step), and another, university autonomy in the choice of evaluation or accreditation agency from a register (a fourth step). Needless to say that the latter could potentially conflict with the reality of *national* accreditation systems in Europe. Yet, the idea was not totally new; it was discussed at the end of the 1990s already (see note 43).

It took more than one year for the European Parliament and the Council to adopt a *Recommendation on further European Cooperation in quality assurance in higher education* (Recommendation…, 2006). The Bergen Conference was held in the meantime; this most probably stimulated final support in the European Parliament and the Council. The final text differs from the Commission's proposal; nevertheless, it took an important step further regarding all main open themes and issues of QA in European higher education.

The *Recommendation* noted that »[a]lmost all Member States have set up national assurance systems and have initiated or enabled the establishment of one or more quality assurance or accreditation agencies« and made a direct reference to the Bologna Process and to results of the Berlin and Bergen Conferences. It is recommended, among other points, that Member States »encourage representatives of national authorities, the higher education sector and quality assurance and accreditation agencies, together with social partners, to set up a "European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies"« and »enable higher educa-

tion institutions active within their territory to choose among quality assurance or accreditation agencies in the European Register an agency which meets their needs and profile, provided that this is compatible with their national legislation or permitted by their national authorities« (points 3 and 4).

A strong affinity between the EU *Recommendation* and the process of developing 'practicalities of implementation' within the Bologna Process can be noticed. The E4 Group continued its work after Bergen and produced a report on »a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies« for the London Conference (ENQA, 2007). It was agreed that the main purpose of the Register is to »provide clear and reliable information about reliable and trustworthy quality assurance agencies operating in Europe«; and therefore »the Register requires its own independent structure and organisation«[46] (p. 6). The report mentioned the role of national authorities in the work of the Register as a particularly »important and sensitive issue« and concluded »that BFUG representatives may become voting members of the General Assembly if they so wish, but should have non-voting observer status on the Register Committee. […] consideration of individual applications should be undertaken by the Register Committee, which should not include representatives of national authorities as members« (p. 9).

The entry criteria represents compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA* from Bergen as demonstrated »in a report of an independent review of the agency (normally undertaken on a national basis)«. Such a review is further explained as »commissioned by relevant authorities in a EHEA state, but carried out independently from them« (p. 6). However, »[i]n the event of an agency being unable to undergo, for whatever reason, a national review, or one organised by ENQA, the Register Committee could authorise the applicant agency to commission an independent review from a third party« (p. 10).

The E4 report did not mention the idea of 'university autonomy in choice of an agency' (of course; it is not an issue of establishing the Register) but it is clear enough that with the Register European higher education would get – some kind of – 'supra-national authority' in QA. Time is needed to answer (paraphrasing Guy Haug from 1999) the question of whether this is 'an independent European body' to which institutions 'could turn for an evaluation of their curricula that would not be biased by national stakes'. At least, it is the first concrete step.

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[46] »E4 proposes that the Register should be managed by a non-profit, legally independent entity involving the members of E4, other consultative members of the BFUG, and the national authorities of the EHEA« (p. 8). »The day to day operation of the Register would be in the hands of a Register Committee, […], and which would consist of E4 and the consultative members of BFUG representing social partners« (p. 9). – See note 20 on 'consultative members' of the Bologna Process.

Between Bergen and London, the 'concerting' of QA issues progressed at the institutional level as well. Thus, *Trends V* reported that already »[o]ver 95% of responding higher education institutions stated that they conduct internal evaluation of their programmes, of which over 70% do so on a regular basis« and made a reference to »the Trends III findings, where 82% answered that they had some form of internal mechanism for monitoring the quality of teaching« (Crossier, Purser, Smidt, 2007: 56). Supported by these findings on internal evaluation, *Trends V* noted »a significant development in the quality assurance arena« and interpreted it in one of the subheadings as »the rise of quality culture« (p. 58) at the institutional level. At the end of this chapter, the report drew attention to the emerging consensus across the higher education community as well to the growth and development in national and regional quality assurance systems across Europe, and concluded that these endeavours »have paved the way for a considerably more constructive approach to quality assurance in general« (p. 61).

At first sight, it seems as if there were no major problems in harmonising positions on quality assurance at the London meeting (yet, there was a long and winding road from the first drafts to the final communiqué). In respective paragraphs, the ministers found the Bergen *Standards and Guidelines* »a powerful driver of change«, they established that »[e]xternal quality assurance is much better developed than before« and repeated the Berlin statement that »the main responsibility for quality lies with HEIs« and that »they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance« (London Communiqué, 2007: 2.12).

The next two paragraphs of the *London Communiqué* took that step (albeit carefully) which was temporarily postponed in Bergen. The E4 Group which organised the first European QA Forum in 2006 was encouraged to continue to organise it on an annual basis. The ministers also thanked the E4 Group »for responding to our request [from Bergen] to further develop the practicalities of setting up a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies«. The ministers *did not 'adopt'*[47] the Register – as they did in Bergen with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA – but only

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[47] At this point, the choice of terms cannot be a coincidence. The E4 group proposed quite a different sentence to be included in the *London Communiqué*: »We adopt the operational model of a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies, as proposed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. We commit ourselves to the implementation of the Register« etc. See ENQA, 2007: 15. – It is impossible to overlook that a similar formulation as proposed by E4 was already used in Bergen: »We commit ourselves to introducing the proposed model for peer review of quality assurance agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria.«

'welcomed' it: »We welcome the establishment of a register by the E4 group, working in partnership, based on their proposed operational model. The register will be voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent« (London Communiqué, 2007: 2.14).

In Bergen, a political agreement was achieved on QA 'standards and guidelines' for EHEA. In London, the Register was recognised politically by ministers representing 46 European countries. These two decisions marked an important turn in the development of European higher education.

The European Higher Education Area: inter-governmental vs. inter-institutional co-operation

The transition from an 'interventionary' to a 'facilitatory' state was characterised by *strengthening the role of institutions*: 'autonomy for accountability' could often be heard after this process began. The role of institutions has again come to the fore within recent discussions on quality enhancement in higher education: it has become clear that the *primary responsibility for quality should be with higher education institutions*.[48] As we saw, the *Berlin Communiqué* politically recognised this position. At the same time, there is broad evidence that the institutions themselves have increased their awareness of the importance of this position in the contemporary restructuring of the higher education sector and developing new institutional missions. An echo of these trends can also be seen in surveys. For example, *Trends IV* turned its focus away from the fact that »the differences among individual European countries are enormous« to »a clear trend toward more institutional approaches to exploit synergies, economies of scale and spread models of good practice at institutions which do not suffer from low degrees of autonomy« (Reichert, Tauch, 2005: 32).[49] *Is it possible that pan-European institutional co-operation can help overcoming old divisions where the subsidiarity principle sets limits on nation-states?*

Since it is obvious that Europe needs some common means (standards, guidelines etc.) as well as the political – today mostly inter-governmental – decisions

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[48] In recent years, the EUA contributed importantly to this direction: »Universities stress the link between a systemic quality culture, the scope of autonomy and funding levels, and call on governments to acknowledge that greater autonomy and adequate funding levels are essential to raising the overall quality of Europe's universities« (Glasgow Declaration, 2005: point 27).

[49] »The essential aim of the Bologna reforms, namely to create a European Higher Education Area which is predicated on quality and therefore attractive to its members as well as the outside world, can only be achieved if the concern for quality is not reduced to the establishment or optimisation of external quality assurance processes alone, but considers all processes of institutional development« (Reichert, Tauch, 2005: 33).

related to them, we should not fall into the illusion that the work will be accomplished at this level. There are huge distances between 'overarching frameworks' and individual institutions. Regional (perhaps 'fractional'?) solutions are also needed and not only 'pan-continental'. There are several open questions that have still not been elaborated properly or not tackled at all. For example, how the various national traditions relate to the idea of a common quality assurance system? To what degree can the size of a (small) national higher education system or (small) linguistic contexts determine the physiognomy and functioning of a specific quality assurance system? Can regional quality assurance co-operation networks be helpful in bringing academic communities closer together? Will they probably increase the existing differences? And so on.

These questions only strengthen the perception that the process of 'coming together' reached a point where higher education institutions and their stakeholders can further it even more easily than governments (implicated in serious dilemmas on sovereignty, subsidiarity, the European Constitution etc.). That is why the QA issues in the emerging EHEA can be considered as a push for bringing academic communities closer together. *Institutions should respond to this challenge pro-actively and strive for quality culture* – but governments should not forget their public responsibility for the smooth running of systems. The quality of a higher education system is both a determining factor affecting the status of individual institutions nationally and internationally and a key to national economic and social well-being.

Despite the long and ongoing 'coming together' many differences are still found among the national systems; some of them will certainly remain. Some are of a relatively systemic nature and may be considered as issues that will disappear parallel to the development of common tools (*means*), while others – being more lasting and more firmly established – are of a more content and contextual nature (*aims*) and also more permanent. In particular, quality assurance systems vary from country to country and sometimes even within them: »various networks work for themselves on procedural standards« and »a competition of varying "codes of good practices" might be the result. […] One solution will certainly be to come to an agreement between the different networks on how to mutually recognize the varying 'codes'« (Hofmann, 2005: 4).

Is it feasible to expect such an agreement to be developed in a European inter-governmental process? Inter-governmental support leaning towards this aim is crucial but a functional agreement could be definitively reached at another level only. As far as the *means* are concerned all European countries and all higher educa-

tion institutions need compatible higher education systems supported by *national legislative frameworks*. As far as the *aims* are concerned, the development of a *genuine quality culture* is far more important than 'administrative prescriptions'. As incorrigible optimists we have to presume that higher education institutions, students and staff consider these *aims* to be most important for their future.

For these reasons, quality assurance in higher education should not be treated *only as a managerial task* par excellence (certainly: a lot should be done precisely at this level). The heterogeneity and diversity of higher education in today's Europe or in the EHEA after 2010 should not only be regarded as a chaos of different means that hinders better achievements; heterogeneity – both in differences as well as in similarities – need to be read in context. Quality in higher education should also be treated *as a cultural category*. Quality does not merely refer to 'more' or 'less' but also to 'worse' and 'better'; it should also be considered in relation to 'good' (as a cultural and ethical notion) and not only to 'effectiveness'.

The overarching framework of qualifications and European standards and guidelines for quality assurance have similar logics and supplement each other. They reflect and synthesise numerous previous discussions; they refer to the logic of the higher education developments of the last decades. They mark an important landmark in the internationalisation of higher education but they should not be treated as completed. The challenges brought about by the development of mass higher education in the global environment are huge: to make diverse systems comparable and compatible, to promote mutual trust by creating quality culture while at the same time the diversity of national higher education contexts – as well as subject areas[50] – should be fully respected.

This is a demanding agenda but contemporary trends in all European countries persuade us that »different independent national frameworks, which are not linked together in a coherent way, would not fulfil the learners' expectations of a European Higher Education Area of transparency and mobility where qualifications are easily recognised across borders. […] In order to facilitate fair recognition it is necessary for foreign partners to trust that national qualifications also in practice correspond to the levels to which they are attached. In this

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[50] It is impossible to discuss here the various issues emerging at the level of specific academic disciplines, subject areas etc. However, with regard to the compatibility of higher education qualifications and improvements in quality teaching it is necessary to stress the EU-sponsored project *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe* (in short: *Tuning*) launched in 2001. It encompassed around 150 European universities working together in 'tuning' nine subject areas – from mathematics to history, from education to European studies. For details, see González, Wagenaar, 2003, 2005, and http://www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm.

context, the quality assurance system, however it is organised nationally, has a role to play« (A framework…, 2005: 75).

Effectiveness as well as innovation and productivity are today expected from higher education: often for good reasons. However, responsive and responsible higher education cannot consider innovation and productivity only as *external* purposes; higher education (both institutions and the system) should be innovative and productive for itself, *internally*: searching for a new identity to meet the new challenges. There have been progressive periods and there have been deep crises in the history of European universities. Experience proves that they took immense forward steps when they found innovative and productive responses to the challenges of the time whereas persisting with the old forms and discourses did not help. They should learn from these lessons today. Neither the unlimited commercialisation of higher education and research nor the dignified contempt of academic traditionalism can yield truly innovative and productive answers to the key questions of our time.

An understanding of these questions should not be caught up within the circle of opposite complaints like 'there are never enough financial resources for higher education institutions' or 'dropout levels from higher education are always too high'. The higher education of today and tomorrow is not only 'more' or 'less' than yesterday and the day before; if it comes to a turning point between the 'previous' and the 'current' then it is *different*. Therefore, the effectiveness of higher education should not only be understood as a mere quantitative entity; it is *qualitative*. We should be aware that treating ideas only instrumentally renders »sterile the soil of human intellect«;[51] yet, we should not forget that ideas are sterile if in their final results they do not provide new instruments to help people and society. At this point, real innovation and productivity have always found sold grounds.

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[51] Bok reports that »Norbert Weiner, founder of cybernetics, wrote in 1973 that treating ideas as property and introducing the profit motive of patent royalties instead of pure love of discovery would "render sterile the soil of human intellect"« (Bok, 2005: 140) Bok quotes Norbert Weiner's *Invention: The Care and Feeding of Ideas* (1993), p. 151.

CHAPTER 3

On higher education governance

Governance is an old term and at first sight it seems to be simple and clear. As a word with ancient roots it can be found in several modern languages; quite often with various meanings. Nevertheless, in various languages we can say and understand that 'a king governs (rules, controls) a kingdom well or poorly' or that 'somebody's principles govern (influence, direct) their life' while we can also say that 'people obey – or disobey – their king' or that 'somebody complies – or does not comply – with their internalised principles' etc.

In general, governance is perceived as the exercise of authority, control or direction. We most often associate governance with political authority (government; but we should not confuse or equate them: governance is not government) and with broader issues in society and politics which demand institutions and control, yet we also associate it with the economy and organisations (e.g. 'corporate governance'). It is usually understood in relation to administrative and managerial issues; clearly governance comprises the processes and systems by which a society, an organisation etc. operates although it cannot be reduced solely to this dimension. Yet, how do we use this old term *in the context of contemporary higher education*?

Before answering this question we will make a short detour into its history.

»The agents themselves must consider what is appropriate to the occasion«

As in so many other cases, the roots of this term go back to ancient times. The Latin '*gubernare*' still sounds quite familiar in various modern languages. Even its Greek background can produce a surprisingly contemporary linguistic association for modern ears: '*kybernaein*' – cybernetics? Not really; '*kybernaein*', means to steer (a vessel) while '*kybernetike* (*tekhne*)' is the art of steering (a vessel). Nevertheless, the two meanings – an old and a very recent one – call out to be

compared: on one hand *navigation*, the old art of ascertaining the position and directing the course of vessels at sea while, on the other hand, *cybernetics,* the modern theory of control and communication in machines and organisms.

With the ancient Greeks, when human conduct was being discussed by philosophers, the art of steering, navigation – or 'governance' as 'directing the course at sea' – was a frequently used metaphor, often parallel to the art of medicine. Thus, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 1908; 1104a) we find the following statement:

> *»But this must be agreed upon beforehand, that the whole account of matters of conduct must be given in outline and not precisely, as we said at the very beginning that the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter; matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixity, any more than matters of health. The general account being of this nature, the account of particular cases is yet more lacking in exactness; for they do not fall under any art or precept but the agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion, as happens also in the art of medicine or of navigation.«*

In this paragraph, Aristotle obviously dealt with ethical problems yet »matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us« are seen as parallel to medicine and navigation. Let us pursue this example and say that matters concerned with navigation also »have no fixity«; »they do not fall under any art or precept« but sailors themselves »must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion«. Like doctors in medicine, they do not study 'health itself', as Aristotle said, »but the health of man« (1097a); with every particular patient doctors must also »consider what is appropriate to the occasion«. – Just like governors in governance?

Aristotle admonished the uniqueness and singularity of 'the occasion' that we encounter again and again in our lives and always have to decide what is most appropriate in a particular case. He rejected 'precepts', that is, ready-made recipes. He relied on his idea of *phronesis*, 'practical wisdom' as a cultivated ability – the trained insight of man – which helps us make appropriate decisions in various unique human situations. When considering a decision, we have to »consider what is appropriate to the occasion«: we have to take the always unique mixture of specific circumstances into account. Certainly, a sailor should be educated and trained to read sea maps, understand changing weather conditions and the nature of vessels etc. but he always has to choose the appropriate decision in the given

circumstances at sea, and not merely apply precepts learned on land. Therefore, nobody can learn how to navigate simply by consulting a set of prescriptions for the reason that they can never be detailed enough to be applied with accuracy to any case and because the selection of which prescription to apply is a matter of requiring a concrete insight, something that is not determined by an abstract rule. The stress is not on »precepts«; the stress is on »the agents themselves«.

If we now change our focus from 'governance' as 'directing the course at sea' to governance in its modern sense at least two messages emerge from these considerations. As first, 'given circumstances' do not only apply to those 'objective factors' determined by nature: e.g. buoyancy, the position of North, weather conditions etc. They also apply to 'people on board': a reasonable captain would always take a decision after very carefully considering *who* he has on board – well-trained parachute troops or a group of tourists with small kids. The answer to this sensitive question can decisively influence the way of interpreting 'objective factors' and taking decisions. Further, this is the point at which modern political philosophies and their popular applications in political culture generally established a new understanding of governance: *people cannot be just an object of governing*. Good and effective governance calls for 'ownership'; it is only achieved together with partners and stakeholders; it presupposes broader policy consultations and participatory processes. Here we talk about *democratic policy development* and *democratic governance*.

Second, for some – let us say relatively academic – purposes it might be absolutely legitimate to consider governance theoretically, that is, 'in general', as 'governance itself'; however, it is absolutely inappropriate to consider it in this way when we approach the singularity of 'real life'. We reiterate: general precepts or ready-made recipes do not help at all when we find ourselves in the complex conditions of 'real life' and in a position to take decisions which could influence and/or direct other people (or ourselves alone). At this point, we should be particularly cautious today – especially within an academic context – when various governance issues are increasingly supported by 'theoretical counselling' from highly specialised science and research pools and when this kind of assistance has even become export merchandise.[52] On one hand, it is sometimes argued that the real issue is just a matter of inventing, defining and applying 'the most efficient model of governance'. On the other hand, it is not difficult to agree that within this assistance as a rule »a very low value is placed on the cultural

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[52] A sad example of this trend has sometimes been seen in ad-hoc international 'aid projects' to 'post-conflict countries' as, for example, some countries in South-east Europe.

and historical skills« and that »the situation observed in recent years where social scientists offer advice to troubled countries while possessing minimal knowledge of local societies, combined with the frequently poor results« does not give a reason to be proud; on the contrary, it »provides encouragement to question the intellectual *status quo*« (Rosovsky, 2003: 20).[53] Therefore, we can also talk about *fair governance* and the *governance culture*.

A new concept with growing frequency in higher education

So how do we use this old term in the context of contemporary higher education? In discussions on higher education governance seems to be a relatively new concept and at least in some European languages there can also be certain problems of how to translate and use it in a context dominated by traditional terms. The term *government* has been used, of course, very frequently in contemporary policy discussions relating to higher education although this has not been the case with *higher education governance*. For example, it was not used in any well-known and influential international documents of the last 15 or 20 years; nor in the *Magna Charta Universitatum* (1988), the *Lisbon Convention* (1997), the *Sorbonne* and *Bologna Declarations* (1998, 1999) etc.

Modern electronic search tools allow us an excellent opportunity to check linguistic developments and changes. Searching for 'governance' within the so-called Bologna *Trends* reports (understood as representative enough to check developments in higher education in Europe after 1999) can help us observe its coming into use: there are no hits at all in *Trends 1* (1999), two hits appear in *Trends 2* (2001), four hits in *Trends 3* (2003), eight hits in *Trends 4* (2005) and again only four hits in *Trends 5* (2007). Taking into account other reports and documents it is not difficult to conclude that use of the term 'higher education governance' is obviously growing; however, the absolute figures do not seem to support the claim that it is really a frequently used expression today.

It is also interesting to see within which context the concept has been emerging. Surprisingly (or not), both references from *Trends 2* refer to higher education in South-east Europe: with regard to the Dayton Peace Accords the

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[53] While discussing 'internal permeability' and disciplinary barriers within modern universities Rosovsky argues that »no one stands higher than theorists, today using almost exclusively the sophisticated language of mathematics. This methodology – this adoration of science – means that culture and history play almost no role in analysis. Business cycles are a worth subject of study, but not Japanese or Argentinean business cycles. After all, one does not study Japanese or Argentinean physics; we simply study physics« he concludes cynically (Rosovsky, 2003: 20).

»unique problems of governance and co-ordination« in Bosnia and Herzegovina are mentioned on one hand and, on the other, »the Interim Statute« aiming »at restoring autonomous governance at the University of Prishtina« (Haug, Kirstein, Knudsen, 1999: 47, 69). Already here it is impossible to overlook that the first reference refers to the *governance of a higher education system* while the second refers to the *governance of a higher education institution*. All four references from *Trends 3* stress institutional 'governance and management structures' (Reichert, Tauch, 2003, 24, 73) and the need to change or improve them (e.g., in relation to quality assurance, supervisory councils etc.). It is similar in *Trends 4*: internal 'governance structures' are most often used in relation to institutional leadership and internal management but also in relation to recent systemic reforms in various countries (Reichert, Tauch: 2005, 7, 32, 41, 42, 46, 62). The *Trends 5 Report* is not much different: institutional governance is in the very front but a new stress is also given to student participation in higher education governance (Crosier, Purser, Smidt: 2007, 53, 76, 80, 87).

Thus, the concept of governance seems to be more frequently used within the institutional context than at the system level. In a compendium of basic documents in the Bologna Process, the earliest use of this term can be found in the EUA's *Message from Salamanca* (March 2001), this time in relation to quality issues: these issues encompass »teaching and research as well as governance and administration, responsiveness to students' needs and the provision of non-educational services« (EUA, 2003: 64). The *Message from Salamanca* was addressed to the Prague ministerial meeting but the concept of governance as such did not find any echo in the *Prague Communiqué*. Nevertheless, an important change in accent did occur: the social dimension of higher education was recognised in Prague[54] and thus a new context was also provided for the emerging concept of 'higher education governance'.

As may already be seen from checking the *Trends* reports, the frequency of the concept's use increased during the period between the Prague and Berlin Conferences (2001-2003). Thus, in May 2003 the EUA Graz Convention put the topic of »improving institutional governance and management«[55] firmly among its five key themes and launched it in the middle of further discussions on the

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[54] »Ministers affirmed that students should participate in and influence the organisation and content« of education at universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process« (Prague Communiqué, 2001).

[55] See *Graz Reader* (2003), 12-14. It contains 17 such references, as many as the Glasgow Reader two years later; they are mostly related to governance structures and university management. Yet, the *Glasgow Declaration* contains only a vague reference to »governing structures and leadership competence«.

role of higher education institutions while, on the other hand, a special Bologna Seminar was organised only a few days later in Oslo on *student participation in governance in higher education*.[56] This seminar broadened the meaning of higher education governance to encompass an important dimension that was later confirmed by ministers in Berlin: »Students are full partners in higher education governance. Ministers note that national legal measures for ensuring student participation are largely in place throughout the European Higher Education Area. They also call on institutions and student organisations to identify ways of increasing actual student involvement in higher education governance« (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). In fact, this was the first – and so far the last – time that an official Bologna document (a communiqué) adopted by ministers used the term 'higher education governance'.

Higher education governance is obviously a *multidimensional concept*. On one hand, it can be connected directly to government(s): in modern times, governments 'govern' social subsystems like higher education etc. It is important to note even here that this task has already exceeded the limited national scope. On the other hand, in its common use it is close to 'management' and/or 'administration', particularly with regard to institution(s) and/or organisations. Further, it also provokes questions of participation in governance etc. At this point, before examining any further details, we propose roughly distinguishing between the three structural dimensions of higher education governance (HEG):

(a) *internal* or *institutional HEG*: governance of higher education institution(s);

(b) *external* or *systemic HEG*: governance of higher education system(s); and

(c) *international* or *global HEG*: governance of higher education systems within an international (global) perspective, e.g. the Bologna Process, the Lisbon Recognition Convention etc.

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[56] This has so far been the first official Bologna event directly related to – a particular dimension of – higher education governance. See *Bologna Follow-up Seminar on Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education*, Oslo, June 12-14, 2003. Report from Council of Europe, Annika Persson. Article by Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe. Oslo: Ministry of Education and Research [2003]. Also see Bergan (ed.), 2004. – The Council of Europe organised another conference on this issue soon after the Bergen Conference of Ministers; see *Higher Education Governance between Democratic Culture, Academic Aspirations and Market Forces* Strasbourg, September 22-23, 2005. Also see Kohler and Huber (ed.), 2006.

Structural dimensions of governance: an interdependent totality

The term 'higher education governance' as we use it today did not appear in traditional discussions on higher education; yet, this does not mean that traditional higher education institutions were not 'governed'. Since the origins of European university, it has always been very important to steer the course of an institution and regulate its internal organisation as well as its relationships with both the environment and 'external authorities'. Therefore, for any period it is possible to distinguish between internal and external 'governance' or 'government'[57] in a certain way. However, higher education governance as today's concept radically differs in certain aspects from older traditions.

There is much evidence that the conceptual origins of the modern term 'higher education governance' are closely linked to the complexity of the societal context characterised by the *transformation from elite to mass higher education* which has occurred during the last few decades and which was analysed in Chapter 1. The phenomenon of mass higher education involves a demarcation between traditional and modern higher education in several respects. A review of developments in the past two or three decades shows that the democratising and liberalising of access to higher education put the need for systemic reforms onto national and institutional agendas everywhere. The Eurydice study on 20 years of reforms in European higher education found that »the major focus of legislation and policy was the management and control of higher education institutions and in particular the financing of such institutions« (Eurydice, 2000, 33). As has already been argued, mass higher education challenged – and in its further course totally changed – the traditional university as well as its complex relationships with the modern state.

It is widely recognised that throughout Europe the government role in the governance of higher education institutions has been and remains very significant. However, since the 1980s governments have been gradually withdrawing – in various directions – from direct institutional governance: more autonomy was suddenly given to institutions but also more accountability was expected. Thus, after the unannounced and unexpected storms of the late 1960s and early 1970s, universities found themselves up until the 1980s – in some places a little earlier,

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[57] In dealing with the management and resources of medieval and early modern European universities *A History of the University in Europe* contains detailed contributions on its 'internal' and 'external government' (Rüegg, 1992, Vol. 1: 119-133, Vol. 2: 164-183).

in others a little later – in a totally new environment. As universities, they had to be able to reflect these changes and to understand that they should take them into account while reconsidering their mission. The famous convention of European universities in 1988 – »four years before the definite abolition of boundaries between the countries of the European Community« and, we should add this from today's point of view, two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall – stressed the importance of being »aware of the part that universities will be called upon to play in a changing and increasingly international society«. Its most remarkable message is that »the university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies […]. To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority […] and economic power« (*Magna Charta*, 1991: 59).[58]

However, this is not the first time universities have found themselves in radically changed circumstances. The debate on autonomy goes back to the very beginning of universities. Yet, as discussions on university relationships with the 'external world' in general and on university autonomy in particular can sometimes be treated as 'eternal issues', in reality these issues have been appearing each time as *different*: always in concrete ways and in a new light. If we compare the concept of autonomy as it appeared during previous centuries and in modern times then there are actually two concepts which differ substantially in at least at one point. Universities of the 'old times' had to negotiate and articulate their relations with 'external' – either secular or church – authorities; at first sight similarly as in modern times. Like today, they depended on them to grant them their particular power (autonomy) as well as for the more 'material' troubles of their survival. However, they were confronted by circumstances *prior to the appearance of a modern nation-state*.

As was briefly already stated, the birth of industrial society in the 19th century marks a sharp turn in the development of higher education. The traditional mission expressed as the '*pursuit of truth*' and '*disinterested research*' was challenged in a radical way and for the first time it confronted the '*needs of the economy*' very directly. Universities met a new, previously unknown agent; as a consequence, they also encountered competitors, other higher education institutions closely related to *professional training* aimed at the 'needs of the economy'. The challenge

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[58] In his speech on the occasion of adopting the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, the Rector of the University of Bologna Fabio Roversi-Monaco was even more direct about how »to take up the challenge of what is new«: »The society into which this new University has to integrate itself is the advanced industrial society of our time […]. It would be a serious mistake if the University, in this new society, decided to withdraw into itself, into its pride of academic corporation« (*Magna Charta*, 1991: 13). Also see the first chapter, note 19.

was even bigger: they faced a newborn *modern nation-state* that understood the protection and acceleration of economic development in terms of the '*national market*' as the most important issue on its political agenda. The dissemination of knowledge and skills and organisation of research as the means for strengthening 'productive powers' simply became an integral part of this agenda. »Until the nineteenth century one cannot observe any visible direct connection between the economic development of countries and their university systems« (in 't Veld, Füssel, Neave, 1996: 20-21); now, this question was raised loudly and it was necessary to respond to it – yet in circumstances that had radically changed.

In practice, these circumstances differed from country to country; nevertheless they had a common denominator: the challenge to universities to become *national* universities. This meant a huge challenge to their traditional, '*universal*' role. There were no geographical, political and institutional delimitations for universities in the middle ages[59] but in the 20th century we experienced borders between various higher education systems. They grew up parallel to the industrialisation processes in modern nation-states. Thus, as a sub-chapter to the protection of domestic markets protective measures in the field of higher education qualifications emerged and various national recognition procedures – predominantly for professional recognition – were also put in place. At the national level decisions were made to classify institutions, their qualifications etc. on one hand and to establish selection procedures on the other. In these circumstances, it became necessary to not only regulate relationships between the state and an individual institution in a new way but to regulate the system, namely, *to govern the national system of higher education*.

From this angle, the 20th century was a period of the growing regulation of national systems of education; the importance of systemic governance was continuously increasing. Specific features of particular countries and/or regions which developed originally as cultural traditions were gradually transformed into sophisticated legal systems and reinforced by political action. Europe developed strong public education systems but the management, control and financing of education institutions are simply not the only legislative issues. Knowledge and skills as defined in national frameworks of qualifications – usually based on a special legislative provision – had throughout the century their closest relation with the approval of curricula; exact procedures of selection and examination were

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[59] »Until the sixteen century European universities were to a large extent all organized on the same line. They showed no national particularities or local focuses. […] The picture changed with […] the emergence of the European nation state« (Zonta, 2002: 32-33).

developed (e.g. the State Examination) and the working conditions of teachers in public institutions were regulated by governments in detail. The practices of national regulations sometimes overlapped one another but were also separating. A serious problem was encountered when these extremely different and in many respects incompatible national systems started to emerge as a significant obstacles to the new political agenda encompassing mobility, employability, attractiveness and co-operation in society at large as well as in higher education.

Within the historical context we have just sketched we should also reconsider developments in higher education after new challenges appeared in the last quarter of the 20th century and which we briefly reflected on at the beginning of this paragraph. The importance of higher education for economic development has only increased to date; in fact, it has grown enormously and continues to rise. In this 'new light' mass higher education and its rapid internationalisation require an even greater concern over governance. It seems that there are at least two new elements that can significantly influence further developments. As a result of processes in the last two decades, governments are increasingly occupied by *systemic governance* and institutions are recognised as being the most responsible for their *internal governance*. On the other side, the globalisation of economies, the emerging knowledge society, integration processes and international co-operation in the broadest sense also definitively bring a new challenge to higher education – the challenge of higher education *governance in an international context*. It is needless to argue here in detail that all three structural dimensions of governance – *institutional, systemic and international* – construct a triangle: an interdependent totality.

Between academic aspirations, market forces and democratic culture

The concept of higher education governance is obviously multidimensional. However, only considering its structural dimensions or 'levels of governance' would leave further dimensions unexplored. Its multidimensional 'space' can be defined by another triangle delineated by academic aspirations, market forces and democratic culture. This scheme links three key factors together which influence higher education today but at a certain point it seems rigid and deficient. The rigidity can probably be softened if the three '*fixed*' views – the academic view, the government's view (external itself) and the external view (non-governmental) – were to be established as opposed to a '*fluid*' one, the students' view. In such a classification, the academic view exposes the institutional dimensions of govern-

ance as collegiate governance (that is, epistemologically based self-governance), the government's view stresses the systemic dimensions of governance (legal framework, public financing), and the external view calls attention to the 'reality dimension' (efficiency in economic, cultural etc. terms). The students' view is connected to all previous views and, thus, sets the concept into motion.

From certain points of view, the pressure of the economy regarding the traditional role universities have played in the societal environment may today seem inconvenient and even dangerous; however, even when criticisms of the commercialisation of higher education yield convincing arguments we cannot avoid the fact that neither institutions nor society at large can simply return to the middle ages. It is similar with governance at the system level: the legal regulations of national education systems may seem overstated – and they may indeed be overregulated and may urgently need reforms leading towards deregulation – but their radical abolition would put both institutions and individuals (students and staff) into serious trouble as regards standards, financing, the qualifications framework, transparency and compatibility, mobility and employability etc. To summarise, from a 'pragmatic' point of view neither the influence of the economy nor the legislative burdens on higher education can be seen only as a *threat* to academic aspirations; they can also be seen as *supportive,* that is, as 'external' factors which make these aspirations feasible. It is very important to analyse this triangle precisely and thoroughly: as an interdependent totality which is a characteristic of modern times. The threat is not just an illusion – nor a support.

This is particularly important when considering the relationship between internal and external governance. If external factors were treated merely as threats, internal aspirations should be closed off within 'ivory towers'. The metaphor suggests a closed universe of scholars – probably not students – delineated from the 'external world' which hinders them in their pursuit of the truth and disinterested research. However, »the ivory tower is a myth, because in modern institutions of higher education there has always existed tension between service to the public and more contemplative scholarship« (Rosovsky, 2003: 14).[60] Why

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[60] See the first chapter, note 7. Rosovsky argues that »the ivory tower does not describe the modern research university: learning and service are always present. External influences are becoming more powerful for many different reasons: the power of government, the search by commercial interests for knowledge within the academy, the perpetual need for more resources within the university, and – not least – the opportunity for individual faculty members to make economic gains.« A splendid isolation couldn't be an alternative to external influences; Rosovsky argues that the 'external permeability' has a parallel in the 'internal' permeability (e.g. disciplinary barriers). The real question is: »Can universities preserve their objectivity as disinterested researchers and social critics if current trends persist?« (Rosovsky, 2003: 18).

can these external factors not be treated as challenges, proactively, instead of threats from which academia has to withdraw behind their walls? In fact, who says that academia avoids contacts with the 'external world'? In modern academic practice disinterested research is being ever more 'challenged' by research that yields interest. The real question is not 'to close or not to close off from the external world' nor 'to start or not to start commerce with the external world'. The real question is how to respond to the new challenges in a way we will not come to regret.

Probably the biggest challenge of the 'external world' to contemporary higher education institutions is *commercialisation*. Within our societal environments accustomed to well-developed public education systems, initiatives to reorient institutions towards alternative financial resources and entrepreneurship have not only met scepticism and restraint but also criticism and protest. Nevertheless, the proposed reorientation seems to be more and more firmly found on political agendas in all countries. Here, it can remain an open question of whether budget cuts have pushed universities to search for alternative funds or universities' success in finding alternative funds has influenced governmental budget cuts. In any case, since the 1980s it has become quite clear that the extraordinary expansion of the higher education sector for structural reasons cannot expect a proportional expansion in terms of national budgets – particularly if additional pressure from sectors like health care and social security as well as the fact of the ageing society is taken into account. These questions importantly influence governance issues and raise several new dilemmas. However, is commercialisation the only alternative? And what does it actually mean?

In this respect, Europe probably started to encounter similar questions which North America had experienced earlier; for that reason it is also useful to cite the American analyst, Derek Bok, formerly President of Harvard University: »If there is an intellectual confusion in the academy that encourages commercialization, it is confusion over means rather than ends. To keep profit-seeking within reasonable bounds, a university must have a clear sense of the values needed to pursue its goals with a high degree of quality and integrity. When the values become blurred and begin to lose their hold, the urge to make money quickly spreads throughout the institution« (Bok, 2005, 6). It is obvious that we cannot only speak about 'external' threats to institutions but institutions themselves should also be scrutinised; it is important for them e.g. to avoid self-illusions. The almost proverbial truth says that academic institutions have not always been an example

of a transparent and efficient organisation;[61] on the other hand, unfortunately, academic values could suffer from distortions within and not only from pressures stemming from outside institutions. Therefore, interference with the external world can be productive. »Left to itself, the contemporary research university does not contain sufficient incentives to elicit all of the behaviours that society has a right to expect« (Bok, 2005: 28).

As we mentioned above, efficiency is increasingly being demanded from higher education in contemporary systemic reforms. Institutional as well as systemic governance should be improved to bring about better results: this claim seems to be undisputed. However, it would seem quite a joke if one were to propose the transplantation of an efficiency matrix from economic enterprises straight into academic institutions. The nature of teaching and research is 'strange' – as creative work they are characterised by 'soft' standards – and efficiency as expressed in exact, e.g. quantitative, terms is not a helpful guide for them. 'Entrepreneurial' efficiency measures can help in administration and services but can easily damage the quality of education and research; the quality of education and research should be approached differently, otherwise we risk their – quality!

The education process has certain features which distinguish it from ordinary profitable services competing in the marketplace: »a major reason why competition does not yield optimal results in higher education is that students cannot adequately evaluate the options available to them« (Bok, 2005: 179). Efficiency in research as valued in terms of commercially profitable results can only be trivial from a scientific point of view while, on the other hand, the fundamental inquiries in science – e.g. the solar system, cell, the subconscience etc. – have been always useless from the enterprise's point of view. At least in a direct way. It should not be forgotten at this point that a huge and profitable industry grew up on the basis of Sigmund Freud's new paradigm.

For these and similar reasons *the university cannot be governed as an enterprise*. Service to the public and more contemplative scholarship have always co-existed at universities – together with the tensions between them – and the form of institutional governance has always had to bear their uneasy balance in mind.

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[61] Bok argues that »universities have something to learn from the world of commercial enterprise. […] In the first place, university administrators do not have as strong an incentive as most business executives to lower costs and achieve greater efficiency. […] university officials will be less successful than business executives in operating efficiently. Presidents and deans lack the experience of most corporate managers in administering large organizations. […] A second important lesson universities can learn from business is the value of striving continuously to improve the quality of what they do. […] corporate executives have made major efforts to decentralize their organizations and give more discretion to semi-autonomous groups to experiment and to innovate« etc. (Bok, 2003: 24, 25).

Ivory towers and knowledge enterprises can only be regarded as extremes. Today, searching for a balance requires a deliberate analysis of the costs and benefits of commercialisation; yet it puts modern universities in a Ulysses-like position between the prospects of bringing in substantial new revenues[62] and the risks to genuine academic values.[63]

Anybody who has experienced this dilemma knows very well that it is not artificial. What should we do in this position?

Bok calls for *clear academic guidelines*: »Setting clear guidelines is essential to protect academic values from excessive commercialization«.[64] But guidelines alone will not be enough: »Unless the system of governance has safeguards and methods of accountability that encourage university officials to act appropriately, the lure of making money will gradually erode the institution's standards and draw it into more and more questionable practices.« He is quite a pessimist: »Unfortunately, the structure of governance in most universities is not equal to the challenge of resisting the excesses of commercialization« (Bok, 2005: 185).

The university in the market place is a university under public scrutiny. Several authors, including Bok, have argued that universities are becoming more susceptible to public criticism because of their increased importance to the economy and society at large; similarly, the decline of confidence so far characteristic of governments and their agencies can now also be applied to academic institutions. Here comes an important warning signal: »The university's reputation for scholarly integrity could well be the most costly casualty of all. A democratic society needs information about important questions that people can rely upon as reasonable objective and impartial. Universities have long been one of the principal sources of expert knowledge and informed opinion on a wide array of subjects […]. Once the public begins to lose confidence in the objectivity of professors, the consequences extend far beyond the academic community«. Namely, any damage to

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[62] Bok admonishes that revenues are not as high as usually expected: »Despite their attractive features, commercial profits do not always live up to expectations. […] Of an estimated 200 or more patent licensing offices on American campuses, only a small fraction received more than $10 million in 2000 and a large majority failed to earn any appreciable profit« (Bok, 2005: 100-101).

[63] »Another educational cost that commercialisation can incur has to do with the moral example such behaviour gives to students and other in the academic community. Helping to develop virtue and build character have been central aims of education since the time of Plato and Aristotle. After years of neglect, universities everywhere have rediscovered the need to prepare their students to grapple with the moral dilemmas they will face in their personal and professional lives« (Bok, 2005: 109).

[64] Similar statements can be found in other places: »What universities should do instead is to look at the process of commercialization whole, with all its benefits and risks, and than try to develop clear rules that are widely understood and conscientiously enforced« (Bok, 2003: 121). »When rules are unclear and always subject to negotiations, money will prevail over principle much of the time« (Bok, 2003: 156).

the reputation of universities »weakens not only the academy but the functioning of our democratic, self-governing society« (Bok, 2005: 117-118).

The problems which universities and higher education institutions generally encounter today would be trivial if academic institutions were not »at the heart of societies« (*Magna Charta*, 1991: 59), that is, if they were not crowded with students and if they were not expected to contribute to dramatic environmental, energy, health, communication etc. problems through their teaching and research. However, if this were the case they would not be *modern* academic institutions. Modern institutions have to compete with problems that are not at all trivial.

The increasing external demands on modern universities require *internal adjustments*: universities must reorganise themselves, find new modes of operating and answer the challenges of how to carry out their new roles, yet without sacrificing their basic values. *Basic academic values* – e.g. »research and teaching [as] morally and intellectually independent of all political authority […] and economic power«, »scholarly integrity« etc. – are not academic caprices at all. They are of *vital importance for society at large*: »strong universities« (EUA, 2005b) are today a well-recognised and important lever of democratic society and economic development. They must set clear academic guidelines, including in terms of governance. However, the increasing external demands require some 'external' adjustments as well: the governance of a higher education system should support universities in being successful in their endeavours. For (not only) this reason the public responsibility for higher education has been stressed several times in recent discussions and documents. Legislation should contain clear provisions not only about the relationship between higher education institutions and the (nation-) state; the relationships between academic aspirations and market forces should also be specified in a similar way.[65]

In the last instance, the increasing external demands on modern universities have started to require international and global adjustments. These demands are largely accelerated by the globalisation of markets and growing internationalisation of higher education. This dimension is no less important when the interplay between academic aspirations and market forces and democratic culture is considered; yet it differs from the previous two. *Responsibility for higher education* remains with nation-states but there are many problems which exceed the level of national higher

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[65] Bok argues that »the state must intervene to protect legitimate interests apart from the universities themselves« and stresses that »reasonable financial stability is the ultimate guarantee against irresponsible entrepreneurial behavior«. Within this context, in Europe we stress the responsibility *for* higher education; however, not forgetting the responsibility *of* higher education: »Unless universities create an environment in which the prevailing incentives and procedures reinforce intellectual standards instead of weakening them, commercial temptations are bound to take a continuing toll on essential academic values« (Bok, 2005: 196, 197, 198).

education systems. When problems like the recognition of degrees and periods of study – particularly with regard to transnational higher education – come under discussion then the responsibility for higher education becomes international.

There is no supranational political authority in higher education today but there is growing co-operation as proved in Europe's Bologna Process. It is not only a forum in which authorities responsible for the governance of national systems can come together; it also challenges higher education institutions and their governance. As Rector Fabio Roversi-Monaco also said in Bologna in 1988: »In the name of the unity of culture the needs for supranationality of Universities could once more confront the difficulties ensuing from the birth of national States and nationalisms« (*Magna Charta*, 1991: 11).

Higher education governance: a concept open to further reconsideration

Now, we can return to the beginning of this chapter and say that questions of what is supposed to be 'effective', 'fair', 'good' etc. governance also »have no fixity« and »they do not fall under any art or precept« but as sailors at sea we ourselves »must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion«. The analysis of 'the occasion' is therefore crucial. It can – and should – take place in institutional, national and international environments.

There is a certain difficulty in undertaking this analysis. At the institutional level broader dimensions are often invisible while at the international level the »uniqueness and singularity of the occasion« can be ignored. There are several types of higher education institutions and several clusters of higher education systems; all of them are legitimate in so far as they all rest on pronounced philosophies and cultures. It is similar with governance: it is absolutely not a 'neutral technical matter' but is founded on types of institutions and/or systems, that is, on conceptual and cultural backgrounds. This is another argument why there is no 'best precept' for governance. Yet, there are basic principles and there can be no effective, fair, good or democratic governance without them: shared responsibilities and levels of governance, participation and partnership etc., aiming at strengthening the basic roles of higher education.[66]

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[66] »Having considered the philosophical substance of […] university styles that have had an influence in different parts of the world, we can say that the university differs in the priority that each places on scientific research, on the development of the human being, or on the various forms of service to society. It is a question of preference and practical emphasis, not exclusion so that a balance among all three objectives can be reached« (Borrero Cabal, 1993: 30-31).

Therefore, the concept of higher education governance is not uniform, finished, unproblematic nor indisputable. Far from that! As we have seen, it is connected with several open questions, problems and dilemmas. It is welcomed and will surely bring about positive results in that this concept has finally found appropriate attention to be considered from various angles within a broad discussion. Asking these questions and disputing existing dilemmas – always again in concrete contexts – enable us to identify potential collisions that could affect higher education, and to leave the concept open for further reconsideration by never treating it as a final one.

In this regard, the turn of the millennium was a particular challenge to higher education systems in 'new democracies', 'countries in transition'.

CHAPTER 4

The transition

Since the late 1980s the word *transition* has been appearing ever more frequently in a new semantics. It entered everyday vocabularies and has then remained in them. In fact, what do we mean today when we say *a transition*: e.g. a 'country in transition', an 'economy in transition', 'education in transition' etc? A new semantics emerged parallel to the breakdown of the Soviet Empire and relatively quickly became familiar in political, expert and everyday language. On some occasions during this period, the term seems to have been used as a polite and 'diplomatic' expression for circumstances in a country or region where everything was upside down. In any case, the term is very vague. Transition: changing from one set of circumstances to another? If this were a definition, then everybody would always be 'in transition'. Actually, on a very high level of abstraction it is true yet this term is not used today as a philosophical concept. The real issue is not a metaphysical *pántha reî*; the real issue here is what the 'sign' signifies. This often remains unclear in popular use of the term. For this reason we will sometimes keep this term within inverted commas.

At the turn from the 1980s to the 1990s we all faced at least two strategic challenges: (a) the challenge of an open and pluralistic society or a *political transition;* and (b) the challenge of the *emerging knowledge society*[67] or a *global transition*. The first challenge was mainly a characteristic of the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe but its echoes resounded all over the whole world.

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[67] This is another term which is better put within inverted commas: the *'knowledge society'* does not seem to be a true 'knowledge-based' *concept*. Knowledge is a key concept of a human civilisation and comprises several dimensions while the knowledge society is quite one-dimensional. Should we understand all previous societies (other civilisations?) as *not-knowledge-based societies*? Are we living in a 'transition' from 'ignorance-based' societies to a 'knowledge-based' society etc? Indeed, these are rhetoric questions. The fact is, however, that knowledge for the sake of knowledge seems to loose legitimacy in the 'knowledge society' and that today's economy has usurped human knowledge to an unprecedented level. Therefore, the 'knowledge economy' is a much more meaningful term and can be used as a concept. Yet, a comprehensive discussion of the complexity of this issue should be left for another time.

The second one has directly and originally been a worldwide characteristic. If the deep changes seen in the educational systems of the former socialist countries in the 1990s are only understood as 'something' linked to a political transition (i.e. as a necessary adaptation of education to the new political order) then they are being misinterpreted and not understood in their true complexity.

The 'transition in education' – and particularly in higher education – was really pushed forward, yet, not necessarily always and everywhere in a successful way by the second type of transition. In this sense, since the 1980s all countries have in one or another way been 'countries in transition'. Of course, the political transition as described above gives a specific context and provides the necessary 'fuel' for specific changes in all social subsystems. Thus, the 'transition in education' as a 'reflex' to the emerging 'knowledge society' has been a global trend and a compelling need everywhere and for a longer period; the political transition in a specific region such as e.g. Eastern Europe provides political momentum and made the 'transition in education' possible – in its (several) *specific ways*.

At least, this is how I see the case of my country, Slovenia. Changes to the educational system in the 1990s (and already in the late 1980s as we will soon see) were not a mere adaptation to the general new conditions of an open and pluralistic society as emerged in the turbulent changes to the political system in 1990. On the contrary, the changes to the political system were largely brought about by the emerging 'knowledge society': an emerging society where people communicate more easily and in new ways, develop new and different approaches to learning and ambitions about education, practice different lifestyles, change their value systems etc. This is also a society where the educated elite is challenged by mass education. In addition, it is a society where knowledge is absorbed by the economic machine until its last 'useful' – or perhaps 'digestible' – fibre.

In my country, the wakening up of an 'alternative educational discourse' (a term which originated in that period) in the late 1980s was already an integral part of the struggle for democracy. Educational change was not a *post festum* act, a mechanical *residuum* of democracy. As will soon be presented, a failed educational reform (the last of the previous regime) of the early 1980s in combination with the broader political and economic processes of that time already resulted in the mid-1980s in a real need to either re-reform national education urgently or else the national development could have been endangered.[68] At the turn of

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[68] Observed from today's point of view this dilemma was solved quite successfully in my country; unfortunately, it was not the case in other parts of former Yugoslavia.

the 1980s into the 1990s, the educational system had to be reformed even if the political system would not change (a fantastic hypothesis, indeed).

In the 1990s, all countries in Europe and, in fact, around the world encountered the need to adapt and renew their educational systems in line with the substantially changed conditions: political, economic, cultural etc. Certainly, the situation was probably more complex and certainly more turbulent in the so-called 'countries in transition'. Due to a specific historical coincidence both strategic challenges – region-specific and global – overlapped in these countries. But again, the need for educational systems to be strategically changed in certain periods cannot be interpreted merely as the 'transmission' of political dynamism.[69] Deep structural changes are not just mechanical echoes of dynamics in politics and no successful educational reform would be possible with this presumption. Changes are provoked by much broader social, cultural and overall civilisation dynamics which, as a rule, exceed national borders.

The historical trend described as the 'knowledge society' clearly exceeds national borders. In the late 1980s, countries of Western European took some crucial steps forward in higher education, previously so jealously kept behind their national fences: we can only remind ourselves here of the launching of Erasmus and constructing of the ECTS. The Europeanisation process made some firm steps. When the Berlin Wall was finally torn dawn it was not difficult to understand that this process had entered a new era which would demand even longer and more resolute steps. Also in education: an area which was previously not in the foreground of European 'coming together' (Corbett, 2005). However, when the Wall was finally removed it became clear that it was not the only barrier; at least there were two banks now. One part of Europe was 'in transition' and in a certain sense the other one was also 'in transition', but the general circumstances in these two parts were obviously not the same. This situation opened up an additional question facing the already disputed 'transition': does the 'transition' lead towards integration and 'harmonisation' with the other – already 'transited' – bank?

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[69] Of course, there have been educational (and not only educational) reforms for the sake of reforms; sometimes it seems like governments could lose credibility if they do not launch any reform during a political mandate. On the other hand, there have been more substantial reforms initiated – and they seem to be driven by the 'spirit of the time'.

The integration and harmonisation of educational systems

Contemporary discussions of educational reforms within the increasingly international context usually meet serious problems when they fall into the gap between the imperative of presumably necessary *globalisation* and the imperative of *preserving* different national, local etc. *identities*. Both banks present quite convincing arguments. If we consider both sets of arguments carefully it is impossible to conclude that one set easily prevails over the other. Further, they seem paradoxical. In the first place, it is the very idea of education (and culture generally) that, by definition, enables people to communicate 'universally', that is across any linguistic, cultural, social, local etc. border. But then, it is again education (or better: it depends on its success or failure in a given context)[70] which could help in preserving and/or enhancing certain traditions and with identities and transferring them to new generations – to uphold and to change them. However, in certain conditions it could also contribute to their disappearance.[71] Therefore, it is up to education to enhance the *universal character of human knowledge* as well as to respect *different values* and to preserve *cultural and other particularities*. Any educational reform should search for an answer to this enigmatic dilemma and find a difficult balance in it.

Europe has been divided and confronted over the centuries. In modern times, European countries (but not only them) have been searching for various modes of co-operation, association and integration. We have learned to perceive this trend more and more as an imperative of the time. If we consider this trend in relation to education it opens up the dilemma sketched above in a very concrete way. Does the process of *integration* – a broad consensus across countries has been built that it is urgent today – allow such a huge *diversity* of the systems, standards, symbols, contents etc. as European countries have developed in their particular histories? In a 'technical' sense, this extreme diversity hinders integration. On the other hand, to which risks would we expose the process of integration if we demanded a frontal 'harmonisation' of all these contents, symbols and systems?

The European Union put into its fundamental documents that there should be *no harmonisation* of the educational systems of the Member States and that the

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[70] E.g., we can remind ourselves of debates on the PISA results in some countries.

[71] E.g., the issue of the language of instruction.

principle of subsidiarity should be applied in such cases.[72] However, like with all political decisions this decision might also be a temporary one. As we can see, for example, the Bologna Process as a political process which is much broader than the EU-27 already places in a new light the issue of the need to design a more 'convergent structure' or a more 'harmonised architecture' (as was articulated in the 1998 Sorbonne Declaration) of higher education systems across Europe.

Today, responsibility for higher education still belongs directly as to the EU-46 Bologna signatory countries as well as to the EU-27 Member States. In some cases, it belongs to sub-national levels like e.g. the Flemish and French *Communities* in Belgium, the *Ländern* in Germany or *kantoni* in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Country and/or sub-national authorities decide on concrete legal and administrative provisions; 'only' the underlying philosophy, i.e. general principles, fundamental strategies and necessary 'common tools' of co-operation (like the ECTS and DS) are agreed on at the international level.

Nobody can ignore the universality of human understanding and arguing but it is against the very logic of modern culture and modern democracy to expect that 'the global philosophy' can be directly and unproblematically applied in the same mode to any particular environment. Not in these 'post-modern times'. We can easily share similar philosophies ('universal principles') but it is impossible to standardise our particular ways of living on the basis of this similarity. In this respect, there is no 'common European school curriculum'[73] and very probably it is unrealistic to expect changes in this area for a long time. On the contrary, there is a shared belief that educational, cultural etc. *diversity* means a certain *richness, advantage* and even *attractiveness* when compared to a 'melting pot' civilisation.

Therefore, diversity is a value; *diversity should be protected*. It should be enhanced. However, diversity is not only (or not always) an advantage: *diversity*

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[72] »*1.* The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation 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 organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity. […]

4. In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, the Council:

- acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189b, after consulting the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States;

- acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations.« (Maastricht Treaty, 1992, Article 126). This article has not changed in any essential point so far. The fiercely disputed *Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe* also did not touch it (see Draft Treaty…, 2003: 174-176).

[73] This is a place where we can remind ourselves of a strange argument which has quite often appeared in 'countries of transition': certain purely national decisions have been pushed forward as 'European' ('these are standards of the European school'). The Bologna Process has not been excluded from these practices.

can harm. It can cause problems, e.g. in using incompatible tools, in communication, in mobility, in strengthening concrete and direct co-operation at the grass roots level etc. There is no doubt that one's own language is a richness and a value we should protect but we cannot insist on being closed in by it; such 'autism' seems to be totally unjustified and irrational from the point of view of an open society. We therefore have to learn languages, cultures etc. – in order to protect our own language in the modern global society. The preservation of a particular cultural, linguistic etc. identity presupposes multicultural approaches, awareness and values. Another paradox? Not necessarily. It is more an imminent conclusion based on the reconsideration of the clashes and wars between ethnic groups, nations, 'civilisations' etc.

The turbulent times or 'education in transition'

It seems to be the right place here to recall an old and little known story – if known at all. In the early 1980s – apparently far from the time when Europe and the entire world became conscious of the serious threats and unavoidable eruption of conflict in the Balkans – an educational reform took place in the South-east, which also partly contributed to the later decay of Yugoslavia. Later on, this story was practically forgotten amidst the turbulence of the wars and radical changes of the 1990s but it might be again important to understand the educational problems in these territories and some other regions. This story, told in the context of today, could provoke even further associations which we gladly leave to the imagination of the reader.

In the early 1980s, the last educational reform of the former regime, the so-called *Career Oriented Education* (an issue to be discussed in more detail later), faced a double task: to answer the challenges of political liberalism[74] and civil society movements of the 1970s (the student movement in particular) and, at the same time, to adjust education to the 'needs of society' of the time, that is to modernise it. This modernisation of education was understood in the then context of 'socialism with a human face' and in the framework of specific – today almost incomprehensible – political terminology which made socialist Yugoslavia so different from the countries of the Eastern bloc: 'socialist self-government', 'pluralism of interests', 'socialist market economy', 'associated labour' etc. A broad discussion continued beyond the inherent political tensions and conflicts

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[74] It was particularly encouraged by Yugoslavian opposition to the Soviet 'way to communism' in external affairs and by developing the so-called self-governmental socialism internally.

which characterised all of that country's post-war period but were hidden – or 'managed' from behind the curtains – relatively well.

Because the ideological dimension was an important aspect of the educational reform, predominantly as an answer to the rising intellectual liberal opposition, it was only a question of time when open criticism would erupt. It happened during the process of drafting a new common core curriculum in the mid-1980s: in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multicultural society (politically organised as a federation and highly decentralised, in particular after the constitutional changes of the mid-1970s) centralist powers, later identified as the Slobodan Milošević circle, demanded nothing less than the 'harmonisation' of subjects like the mother tongue and literature, history etc., across the entire federation. It is important to add that in those times the responsibility for education was at the level of republics (i.e., federation units), not at the federation level. Therefore, the 'subsidiarity principle' was in use.

This demand provoked a fierce revolt. At least in my country, Slovenia, it also became one of the important levers of the revival of civil society and also a lever of the gradual democratisation process, which led to the country's independence at the beginning of the 1990s. Association and integration processes along with global trends on the larger European scene offered much more perspectives, hopes and chances than the 'harmonisation' attempts within the home country of that time. Strange but true: the internationalisation (i.e., Europeanisation) of education seemed to be the strongest guarantee of protecting the cultural identity of each ethnic group as well as the cultural diversities among them.

The ideologically forced common curriculum was not the only criticised aspect of this reform. In general, there was a feeling of an educational *regression*[75] but there were also rising hopes of forthcoming social and political changes. On this occasion it is impossible to enter into details but only to make a general remark. In my country, criticism of the *Career Oriented Educational* reform culminated in a comprehensive 're-reforming' proposal already in 1988 – and education found itself at the very front of the 'transition' and 'modernisation' of the early 1990s. 'Re-reforming' significantly helped to avoid further regression and to join European and international trends. Unfortunately, this was not the case in all parts of the former common state; for the largest part of it a period of disasters began.

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[75] E.g., in 1981, there were 6,494 graduates registered at Slovenian higher education institutions; in 1991, there were only 5,439 of them (Zgaga, 2004: 46). This trend was diametrically opposed to the trend of the 1990s: 6,419 graduates in 1995, 10,477 in 2000 etc.

The turn of the 1980s into the 1990s should had been a period of 're-reforming' education in all parts of former Yugoslavia, even if no profound political changes and conflicts were anticipated. Yet, this was not the case. Conflicts did appear; in some places in such terrible forms that any attempt to improve education was prevented for a long time. The continuing problems seen in some educational systems of this region are rooted in the fact that it was impossible to approach the reform of education in a constructive way in an earlier period (or better 'on time') and that the issue of modernising educational was becoming increasingly demanding.

Yet, the times have definitely changed. In Central, South-east and Eastern Europe after 1990 the achievement of political democracy triggered complex processes; as has already been indicated, they are usually grasped by the term 'the transition'. The liberalisation of individual initiatives and gradual process of (re)privatisation – in addition to the grave economic problems resulting from crises and losses of former markets especially – led more or less in all countries to consequences that marked a turning point in all fields of social and private life. In these circumstances, education became an even more important factor of social mobility: the changes in social circumstances demand greater individual responsibility and offer greater opportunities for individual incentives – but also previously unimaginable individual catastrophes. Global changes in society dictated new attitudes to education and new types of educational ambitions. Education, acquired knowledge and skills became the generally recognised dominant conditions that determine individual careers. On the other hand, the rapidly growing unemployment figures, which were one of the most socially disturbing consequences of the transition, only emphasised the fundamental changes in value orientations. The proportion of young people wishing to commence further education was growing more than ever before. For those adults who in the new circumstances found themselves out of work, further education – formal or informal – was the only certain solution. The accomplishment of a new level of formal education, skills which may be acquired through education, started to present new and different values in the life of an individual.

As it is clear that these processes are specific, it is also obvious that they are similar to those in many other regions of the world. Yet, as we already noted, in the popular understanding of 'countries in transition' there has often been some simplification, in particular when the term is not used only as a political transition but in a broader context, mixed with value statements, prejudices etc. In such cases, it marks a passage from an obsolete, closed and immobile society

to an open and progressive one; an exit from economic regression and political autarky which leads towards modernisation and global interdependence. It is not just a description of the political situation after the collapse of communism; it is a dynamic product of 'globalisation' as a general trend of the late 20th century – of course, in 'specific circumstances'.

Today, almost two decades after the profound changes in Central, South-east and Eastern Europe, the situation is very different. These are not the same regions as before. Since 1990, their paths have sometimes taken very different routes and have sometimes crossed again unexpectedly. Some countries have made firm contact with 'global trends' and improved their position in international markets while others have encountered ever new difficulties. After experiencing the 'transition' for a long time and getting accustomed to it, it is normal to ask the question: what could lie beyond the 'transition'? (Hopefully, it will not last forever.)

Generalising always proves to be a dangerous approach. The black-and-white simplification expressed in the term 'countries in transition' ignores the real bases of the problem. It is necessary to start by recognising the fact that there are particular situations in each individual 'transiting' country. It is impossible to achieve a simple one-size-fits-all solution, a 'recipe for all', at least not when we are discussing diversity and details and not general philosophic issues. Even if politicians – or experts – agree on certain general features or principles it is still necessary to understand these features and to implement these principles in a particular context of a particular country. Ignorance of this fact has caused many troubles in respective regions and countries. It has also decisively contributed to the fact that the 'transition' sometimes and in some places is becoming permanent.

In order to strengthen national educational reforms and to join European and international progressive trends (if we may so call a 'transition') it is necessary to *improve the image of education* in societies which encounter severe problems on the slippery terrain of the 'transition' to a 'normal' society. The overall position of education in many 'countries in transition' has been weak. The share of GDP spent on education is as a rule (much) lower than in 'transited' countries. As a consequence, e.g. the social status of teachers is weak, their working conditions are poor and their readiness to engage in educational renewal is questionable. Of course, in such a situation the first national priority and most urgent point on the public responsibility agenda is to guarantee the 'routine' functioning of the system; if this is neglected it is extremely difficult to launch the hardly expected frontal reform projects.

An important lever that can help strengthen the general position of education in society is presented in public opinion and public values. Renewal of an educational system is always linked to a necessary change in values and public opinion; not only to a necessary change in political and economic spheres. Democratic and open societies are based on individuals who should be able to compete with their everyday problems and to co-operate with others on the basis of equal rights, solidarity and similar values. To live in a democratic society, to take an individual part in economic and political life, to pay an individual contribution to the values of an open society – all these aims are based on *quality education for all*.[76] Therefore, the 'transition' in education should primarily aim at quality education for all – and not at sweet images of a promised land on the other bank (*dystopias*, as will be argued in the concluding chapter).

These aims can be seriously obstructed if in public opinion education just means ruined schools without basic equipment, lowly paid and poorly trained teachers, outmoded curricula etc. However, these aims can also be fostered if the key (national) priority is given to education and if a certain school improvement is perceived and acknowledged by society. There is only a tiny space between the knowledge-based and ignorance-based society. It is obvious that this is a critical point from which a country could also fall into an enchanted circle, *circulus vitiosus*. The worst situation would be when people lose trust and turn away from education as a chance for an individual (*carpe diem!*) and substitute it with day-to-day survival. This is also the most expensive scenario from the point of view of the country as a whole, not only in terms of its (education) budget. In this case, the 'transition' could last for ever.

Higher education in 'transition': a case study

This quite general reflexion should now return to a more focused approach: a reflexion on higher education in a 'transition' within the concrete circumstances and experiences already discussed above. In the broader historical context, the 1980s was a highly important period for Slovenia since this when fundamental ideas on social life in the future as well as major agents of social and political changes developed gradually and progressively. Also without sophisticated analyses it is most probably clear that such enormous changes should have an ultimate

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[76] Quality education for all is most closely linked with a public responsibility for education; therefore, the »relatively stable financing of education is essential and will be a measure of the wisdom of the government« (Gaber, 2000: 27). It is particularly difficult to implement this principle in 'countries in transition' – but not impossible as one can learn from the quoted text.

impact on social subsystems such as (higher) education. It should be reiterated that higher education was not merely a passive area moulded by pressures from the 'external world' and its tectonic social and political movements, but that specific political demands in the broad educational sphere formed a constituent part of the social dynamism of the 1980s. In addition, we should not forget that turbulent periods always appear on specific historical backgrounds.

The period at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s was, in the Yugoslavia of that time, accompanied by reformist and liberal tendencies in politics and the economy as well as in cultural and intellectual circles. The 'intellectual opposition' in particular demanded – and practiced – the right to criticism and freedom of creativity; it mainly originated at universities and was reinforced by the student movement of the time, also enjoying the strong support of 'radical' professors.[77] In the mid-1970s, the regime succeeded in stabilising the situation through a number of political reforms and thorough a series of constitutional amendments (aimed at further political decentralisation and strengthening the role of the federal republics as 'states', establishing a collective federation presidency, implementing self-management on the basis of the concept of 'associated labour' etc.).[78] Students disappeared from the streets and the 'intellectual opposition' was temporarily ghettoised. The time was ripe for a 'top-down' reform of education as a whole.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the abovementioned governmental reform concept of the *Career-Oriented Education* was ready. It could not be observed only as a mere attempt of 'the Establishment' to discipline the 'anarcho-liberal' universities and to strengthen the ideological function of education; yet, it was an inherent aim of the project. In fact, the concept aimed at modernisation in the broadest sense and deeply affected the entire education system. One of the project's fundamental principles was a direct linking of education with 'associated labour' ('the school as a factory'). Details of legislation in the education field were left to the republics since the federative administration had no direct

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[77] The student movement at some Yugoslavian university centres was strong and predominantly radical in a political sense. However, there were also 'actions' to reform universities from the inside and to change their 'inner logic', i.e. teaching and learning. E.g., at the University of Ljubljana, 'Alternative University' courses were organised by a circle of 'alternative' students and professors in 1972 (Zgaga, 1984).

[78] As part of this 'new step in developing the system of self-government', the governance of universities and their faculties was reorganised on the basis of the same organisational formula as used in the economy at large ('basic organisation of associated labour'; TOZD in Slovenian, OOUR in Croat and Serbian): universities were definitely sliced into independent 'units' (mostly faculties and sometimes their departments; later, some departments were further reorganised into new faculties) and the real 'academic power' was importantly diminished. Even today, the heritage of this period – in combination with a number of factors which cannot be analysed here – makes serious problems for reconsiderations and contemporary reforms of higher education governance.

power in this area (in a formal sense, it was 'deregulation'; however, the necessary 'harmonisation' was achieved through the 'harmonisation of minds').

The adoption of the new legislation (around 1980; at different times in different parts of the federation) on such conceptual foundations resulted in the disappearance of the Higher Education Act and fusing of the legal regulation of higher education with a regulation on upper-secondary education (i.e., 'career-oriented education'). The differentiation between general and vocational educational tracks vanished. Without regard to the relative nature of the previous legal provision, universities lost considerable autonomy when the previous higher education legislation ceased to be effective. Another far-reaching change was the concurrent abolition of grammar schools (gymnasia) as the traditional institutions of general upper-secondary education preparing students for university studies. The reforms provoked a fierce revolt. The first organised protests and actions, especially against the abolition of the gymnasia, took place in Slovenia as early as the first half of the 1980s. It should not be forgotten that protests against the reform were understood as protests against the political leadership of that time.

With the *Career-Oriented Education Act* (1980), the university was deprived of a number of autonomous capacities, especially the right to approve its study programmes and to determine personnel (staff) policies. The 'modernisation' idea of educating concurrently for employment and further studies ('career-oriented') did not contribute either to the quality or efficiency of learning. Another consequence of the concept of career-oriented education – in connection with the 'eternal budgetary problems' – was the regulation of higher education financing which systematically separated the funding of teaching expenses from research expenses; individual faculties competed on their own, more or less successfully, for the funding of the latter by other institutions, mostly quite small research institutes outside higher education, not 'burdened' by students.

Perhaps the most fatal consequences were those resulting from the status and governance of higher education institutions (as mentioned; see note 78). The university was not the basic legal entity in higher education any more but there were faculties, art academies and schools; however, the university merely played the role of some sort of 'meta-institution', their 'obligatory association' (as it was legally defined), which had no real academic powers. Such a *disintegration of the academic sphere* posed a major obstacle to academic co-operation amongst various faculties, caused differences in academic standards among higher education institutions, impeded transfers among study programmes and reduced the effectiveness and rationality of the entire higher education system.

The criticism of the circumstances facing higher education of the early 1980s was linked to the criticism of upper-secondary education. A discussion of the position of education in national strategies took place as part of broader and broader criticisms in public and linked to emerging democratic endeavours. The 'lead times' seemed to be close to an end; the feeling of a 'new era' was in the air. After a proposal to amend the *Career-Oriented Education Act* in a relatively radical way was finally formed as a consequence of several criticisms in the second half of the 1980s, in April 1988 the universities submitted a joint request for a new Higher Education Act separate from upper secondary education. In an atmosphere of progressing democratic movements the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia passed a conclusion adopting this request very soon (May 1988) and, at the same time, proposed that universities prepare the expert framework for the new Act themselves. This was a first sign that trends in higher education governance could change from 'top-down' to 'bottom-up'. On the general political level this was a period of the gradual withdrawing from the central federal administration which was increasingly becoming the loot of Slobodan Milošević. In 1989, the amendments to the *Career-Oriented Education Act*[79] were adopted which took into account some of the fundamental demands formed by that time. However, the discussion of possible systemic solutions continued at the universities.

With the adoption of the amended version of the *Career-Oriented Education Act*, some of the most acute problems of the time were solved. For example, the powers of the governance bodies and in particular the academic councils at higher education institutions were determined anew; the autonomous and integrating role of universities in teaching and research activities was recognised; the gymnasium was 'revitalised' and the necessary legal provision to launch the final examination (*matura*) as a higher education 'entrance ticket' was also prepared. Yet, these changes did not terminate the status and organisation of universities which followed the model of the socialist self-managed economy then already obsolete and disappearing. After the country's independence was declared and after a short period of confrontation with the federal army was over in summer 1991, universities were still merely associations of heterogeneous institutions (faculties, academies, two- and four-year colleges), differing in their standards, financing, teaching and research activities etc. Universities

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[79] Within the given circumstances of the late 1980s, characterised by an enormous sharpening of the conflicts between the political actors of the period before the decay of socialist Yugoslavia, it was only possible to 'amend' the existing legislation; new legislation had to wait until the political transition and independence were achieved.

as associations of institutions were compulsory but, in reality, they remained undefined communities.

After a political decision was taken (1988) that the framework for a new Higher Education Act should be prepared by the universities themselves, the discussion was temporarily halted by the tumultuous events upon the transition into the 1990s. In such circumstances, it was impossible to carry on normal work on the preparation of the new legislation. During this period, however, intense efforts were made to draft the new Slovenian Constitution; it was adopted at the end of 1991 following the turbulent summer events. The following three articles (*Constitution...*, 1993; Articles 57-59) were especially important for the reform of the legal status of universities:

> *»Education shall be free. [...] The state shall provide the opportunity for all citizens to obtain a proper education.«*

> *»State universities and other institutions of higher education shall be autonomous. The founding of these institutions shall be regulated by statute.«*

> *»Scientific and artistic endeavour shall be free.«*

Of course, these general statements needed much more concrete concepts in order to start implementing the new philosophy in practice. In May 1991, a committee was appointed in order to prepare the Higher Education Bill. It consisted of the representatives of universities, students, university staff trade unions and the government. This task was completed with a draft version of the Bill by May 1992, at the time of the dissolution of the first parliamentary coalition. In June – when the second government after the elections of 1990 was formed – the final co-ordination procedure, including government ministries, universities, their (independent) 'member institutions' and student unions, began. In November 1992, the final wording of the Bill was ready and introduced in the Parliament for debate and adoption. At the same time, Slovenia joined the Council of Europe; the action programme developed by its Higher Education and Research Committee was quickly recognised within the country as an important context for further work in this area.[80] The Parliament passed the *Higher Education Act* (*Higher Education...,* 1995) in December 1993. At first glance,

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[80]   The Council's of Europe *Legislative Reform Programme* (LRP) for higher education provided a broader European discussion forum for Slovenian higher education. – See e.g. *Project...*, 1993, *Legislative…* 1995, *Legislative…* 1996.

it probably seemed that the 'transition in higher education' was over; in fact, it was the time to start its implementation.

University autonomy and the pain of implementing it

The *Higher Education Act* (HEA, 1993) stipulated a two-year transitional period for its full implementation. One year after its adoption, the status of both universities of that time[81] was transformed by a special Parliamentary Decree and by mid-1995 both public universities drafted and passed their Statutes as well. On the basis of the new legislation, the first 'free-standing institutions' of higher education (colleges) were also accredited and established.

The legislative reform of higher education and especially the adoption of the new university Statutes, which laid entirely new foundations for their operation in general and especially the relations with so-called 'university members' (i.e. faculties), turned the course of academic life almost upside down. In this process, the *question of autonomy* was exposed several times. If during the period of forming the conceptual framework of the new Act the notion of autonomy was predominantly linked to *academic* autonomy, those problems which appeared with the beginning of implementation also included the topics of *financial* and *administrative* autonomy.

The circumstances in which the freedom of research and teaching was not a self-understood principle and in which the political influence on the solution of academic matters did not only take the course of carefully concealed lobbying on extreme occasions, but was directly and openly established as a system, produced very specific experiences at the universities. From this perspective, the problem of university autonomy was perceived as and reduced to the problem of the relationship between *the university* and *the state*.

There was yet another moment in the background of such a perception, especially at the end of the 1980s: in the ever-increasing democratisation process of that time, all key social questions crystallised in the definition of the relationship between *the civil society* and *the state*. In the time immediately preceding the first democratic elections, this definition risked a purely romantic temptation, verging on the metaphysics of good and evil: the experience of a certain historical form of the state and the clashes with its supreme power created the impression of a state as an intrinsically totalitarian entity, and an internally homogeneous

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[81] The University of Ljubljana (established 1919) and the University of Maribor (established 1975). Today, there are four universities in Slovenia (and a number of other higher education institutions, e.g. colleges); the University of Primorska was established in 2003 and the University of Nova Gorica in 2006.

civil society as an intrinsically democratic and liberal entity – as the source of democracy and liberalism. Such an impression quickly disappeared with the elimination of the one-party state. The gradual segmentation of civil society and experience of conflicts within it (e.g., the abortion question during adoption of the new *Constitution*; in its most extreme form the experience of *bellum omnium contra omnes* in not so distant parts of the once federative state) were important contributions to understanding the concept of the legal state.

Analogously to the process of a changed understanding of the relationship between the state and civil society, the internal relationships at the university were determined. During the adoption of the new *Statute of the University of Ljubljana* (1995), the majority of discussions referred to the composition of the university Senate. The HEA stipulates that the senate should be composed in such a manner »that all scientific, art and professional disciplines [be] equally represented« (Article 21), but the definition of the autonomy permits the universities an »independent regulation of their internal organization« (Article 6) (Zgaga, Jurkovič, 1995). Problems were mainly caused by the fact that, in the former decade, the walls of the university 'member institutions' fortified so much that the definition of scientific disciplines became a matter of the internal (re) distribution of power. Primarily, some disciplines were 'owned' simultaneously by several faculties of the same university, whereby their protagonists often developed rival relationships.

Instead of defining the fundamental disciplines, which should have been fostered by the newly integrated university and which would have offered a basis for the structuring of academic responsibilities and decision-making, the conservative concept granting one Senate seat to each 'member institution' prevailed in drafting the new university Statute (*Statute...*, 1995). A consequence of this solution was that, with the new Statute, technical disciplines were given the majority of votes in the university Senate, which was also a result of a formal procedure of splitting some former faculties (e.g. Science, Engineering) into several new ones during the reorganisation of the university, which was not the case with traditional faculties (e.g. Arts, Law). The experience was painful and valuable at the same time: the implementation of academic autonomy was not a discovery of an *El Dorado*; on the contrary, it opened new questions and, from an outside position, it is quite normal that one of them was the question of the *internal democratic organisation* of university and higher education institutions in general.

Undoubtedly, one should look for the reasons for such an asymmetrical structure of power in the difficult *process of integrating scattered and isolated aca-*

demic atoms – a heritage of previous times. This process was much more difficult inasmuch as their positions in the power net of the former organisation differed. This concerns not only the democratic relationships amongst the 'member institutions', but also the rest of the democratic academic atmosphere in which students and other university staff participate; and also those relations which, in some perfect system of external control, if we may use a simple expression, should not exist amongst scholars at all: in such cases, the 'dirty business' is left up to spheres outside academe.

The realisation of autonomy, however, is not reduced to a simple question of democracy at the university but is a more complex process. It includes a whole range of problems anterior to modern European democracies: e.g., the discourses condensed more than 200 years ago by Immanuel Kant in his *Conflict of Faculties* (*Streit der Fakultäten*; Kant, 1974b) and some even subtler topics. One of the serious topics of academic autonomy in the hundreds of years of the history of universities has also been, for example, the problem of the *individual's autonomy in research and teaching*. This problem cannot be reduced to a mere relationship between the state and an individual (a teacher but also a student, last but not least, any staff member), although there is a recent and broad experience confirming the aforesaid. When a university is or becomes an autonomous institution, the problem of free individual scientific and artistic endeavour is not automatically solved; it is probably not until then that it is raised in a sensible way. We will touch on this issue in the next chapter; now, there is something else to be said.

The university, the state and civil society

If, on one hand, the gradual implementation of autonomy in reality put the university – which, as an academic community, well remembers the past experiences of excessive external control – to its *internal* test, its autonomy is also undeniably determined *outwardly,* yet not only in relationship with the state. The experience of different circumstances and a different institutional status are probably the very reasons that the problem of autonomy as an internal test was underestimated at the university 'in transition', while the external dimension was interpreted as depending on the relationship between civil society and the state and while the later, by its very definition, always regulates 'too much' and – depending on the point of view – saves or spends 'too much'.

Deep in the 1990s, a distinguished academic representative openly said that 'the university personifies the civil society'. In context, the wording was unusually

reminiscent of the notion of the *historical avant-garde* once used but forgotten in the – 'postmodern' – meantime. Regardless of the greater or lesser popularity periodically enjoyed by the university in the broader public, it is my firm opinion that such an estimation is either exaggerated or (mis-)used to replace what was called '*independent*' or '*critical intelligentsia*' two decades before. The discussion of the external dimension of *university autonomy* not only includes the relationship with the *state* – that is, the regulation of the legal system and funding – but also with *civil society*, to its heterogeneous needs, value orientations, individual and group aspirations etc. And this relationship is not necessarily always harmonious.

After 1990, the deeply changed circumstances created tensions and instability in the field of education. Educational ambitions changed profoundly and through the 'transition' period higher education even augmented its otherwise quite important role as a social promoter. No less an important factor of the fast increasing demand for study places at universities at the beginning of the 1990s was unemployment, in particular that of youth. This was the very point where the relationship between the university and civil society was put to the test in these new circumstances. Responsibilities grow with the acquisition of power. The fact is that the interest of the young population in university studies was growing extremely rapidly in the first years of the country's independence. The number of study places at public universities increased (without charging fees to full-time students), although insufficiently, but the structure of places for freshmen in specific disciplines had been changing much too slowly. While places in engineering programmes remain vacant, a rigorous *numerus clausus* was in force overnight in the social sciences and the humanities. And fees started to be charged to the 'outnumbering' candidates enrolled as part-time students.

The 'inner' autonomy was obviously higher on the agenda than the 'external' responsibility. This seems to be one of the main reasons that the public started to believe that the solution to the accumulated problems in higher education could be expected from *private* higher education institutions. New legislation set up accreditation standards and procedures and, of course, allowed private higher education institution. There has not been much effect until today; the private higher education sector in a proper sense in Slovenia is quite marginal. Yet, the problem could also be formulated in a reverse way: *public higher education institutions had to redefine their role in a changed society*. The experience of excessive external control was strong, while the experience of institutional responsibility was weak or non-existent. Prior to the 'transition', it was (or at

least it should have been) the state which 'cared'; who cares now?! – Reform of the university is not only an administrative task; it strikes upon the broad realm of *academic culture*.

However, if the state abdicates the right to be involved in decision-making as to faculty, research and teaching (and this step makes the role of academic culture even more urgent), the problem of autonomy by its very definition moves from the academic to financial and administrative questions connected therewith. A university, and especially a public university, operating under the historical conditions of a 'country in transition', depends on a wise legislator, public funds and the state budget to the highest degree. *Depending* – the term itself is provocative enough. Financial dependence is in the last instance only another term for 'external control'. But, on the other hand, a no less provocative echo appeared in discussions of higher education: institutional *accountability* for public funds. Probably no government could endure even in much more stable conditions than are those existing in the 'countries in transition', if it gave up the control of general educational, social, employment, fiscal and other effects of higher education on the national scale.

But in the modern political and civilised circumstances, *external control* has its *strict limits,* differentiating modern governance from absolutism. All such boundaries are, in a way, defined by *autonomy*: the autonomy of an individual, the protection of human rights etc. Another of those boundaries is the autonomy of communities like universities. However, it should be carefully separated from *autarchy* as an outmoded reflex to an outmoded absolutism.

The slogan '*autonomy* for *quality*' was often heard in the 1990s. Indeed, the issue of quality was raised as the central question of higher education, determining not only its relation to the state and the rest of civil society, but also the internal structuring.[82] The 'golden mean' is determined by a 'common denominator' and a balance between these two 'extremes'. The cancellation and limitation of external control should not be a politically cunning retreat but the necessity for more quality academic outcomes and institutional effectiveness. From this aspect, the autonomy of universities is a national and international, that is, not only an academic, strategy. The university is a particular yet highly important segment of all modern societies which is vitally endangered by pure external control but which, despite its particular position in a social network, cannot afford a fall into *autarkeia*, a self-sufficient scientific economy closed off from outer society.

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[82] Of course, we should not forget its international dimension; yet, this was partly the theme of the second chapter.

Indeed, *autonomia* as a self-governing scientific and educational community is weak and paradoxical but the only true guarantee of the social and cultural prosperity of modern societies.

CHAPTER 5

University and democracy: knowledge and power

In the context of social processes at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s – in the previous chapter referred to as 'transition' and 'democratisation' – we can also perceive a certain theoretical problem which had been puzzling me for some time in a totally new perspective. A certain paradox could not be overlooked: along with the developing process of democratisation in the so-called 'countries in transition' a reverse process also took place: 'a return to good, old values' (e.g. the nation as the supremacy of ethnicity, religion in political life, the family and the role of women etc.). The withdrawal of a hegemonic ideological power was substituted by another hegemonic ideological power.

Similarly, it was not so uncommon to observe the return of academic institutions to their outmoded forms during the 'transition' period. Fortunately, in most cases the withdrawal of previous ideological power over academia was not substituted by a new one; however, the relationship between the *university and power* remained an uneasy one. In which relations with the university is it possible to recognise power? The past ('pre-transitional') bipolar conception of a *university of knowledge* on one hand in conflict with the *rule of power* (government) on the other experienced ever newer dimensions in the tangible processes of social and university reforms during the 1990s.

Regardless of an ambition to take into account all possible relations of the university to power we are here going to analyse the issue on three levels: starting with an epistemological analysis of the university as the *power of knowledge*, proceeding by discussing the university in relation to the *rule of power* or *external power* and, finally, by considering the university as regards its *internal power relations* which is key to the fundamental question of this chapter.

Epistemological meritocracy

If the university is the basic institution of science and knowledge itself, it can be comprehended as the power of knowledge in first place: *scientia est potentia*. Gaining this power means complying with the nature of objectivity, the laws of the world, which implies one's acquaintance with them, knowledge about laws, *rationality;* finally, rationality as *potentia,* the possibility of *practice*. Within such a discourse there is no place for power as a pure derivative of a will, *political power* first of all. Neither power nor passion is experienced at such a university. Power there is based on rational grounds. The concept of knowledge as *disinterested*, as a pursuit of the truth, deprived of all other interests except of an interest in the creation and accumulation of new knowledge, is plausible and provides profound traditions at the same time.

Contemporary analyses merely agree with this fact of long historical attachments, but only in as much as they are actually contemporary do they raise new questions within this age-old subject. In connection with the famous beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* – »*All men by nature desire to know*« (Aristotle, 1952: 980a) – Derrida warns that as regards those issues as early as in the ancient mode of thinking »une hiérarchie théorético-politique« was established (Derrida, 1990: 26). On top of the pyramid there is *the ría*, theoretical knowledge: the purpose of research is not the *benefit* that can be obtained through knowledge, but *knowledge about the beginnings and principles.* The theoretician is the *arkhitektôn* of society; similarly as Plato's ruler-philosopher is above the hand workers who »act without knowing what they do, as fire burns« (Aristotle, 1952: 981b). This »chief-theoretician«, an authority on causes, is by no means distinguished by »practical« capacities, but »la capacité d'enseigner (*to dunasthai didaskein*)«, the capacity of the teaching of others. The »theoretician-teacher« [»chef théoricien«], says Derrida, is on top of the hierarchy because he finds himself on the side of the *arkhè*, the beginning, »du commencement et du commandement«. Even prior to the written word and before everybody else he answers to the *principle of reason,* which is the first principle. For this reason he does not accept proof, but establishes laws. This higher science, coming into existence where there is free time, is given power through its very *uselessness.* It should be added that this very *uselessness* justifies the rational power of knowledge and demands its separation from politics and passion as referred to above.

When Derrida later contemplates the »Idea of University« with German philosophers, beginning with Kant, he exposes the pure continuity of these standpoints despite their historical distance: philosophic or 'lower' faculty, »the

place of pure rationality, is the place where the truth must express itself without control and without concern about 'usefulness', a place where the very meaning and autonomy of the university are united above and outside professional education: the architectonic scheme of pure reason finds itself above and outside the technical scheme« (Derrida, 1990: 26).[83]

But in the epistemological relation to power inherently political (but also social and ethical) philosophy is still also implanted, being already expressed by »theoretical-political hierarchy« deeply in antiquity, and only slightly detectable from Kant's enlightening polarisation of »upper faculties« versus »lower faculty«,[84] of the »right« and »left wing of the parliament of learning« (Kant, 1974b). This statement is not to be comprehended as though political philosophy would in some way be pasted on to epistemology without any closer connection. On the contrary, political philosophy (something similar could be the validity for social philosophy and ethics) is a *consequence of epistemology.*

The point is not in the fact that *power* would simply be a product of the dynamics of 'political' relations, more or less complex relations within a certain community, ejected as temporary 'political' hierarchy, the temporary *relation of powers.* The power of knowledge is not only a category, resisting such dynamics, resisting the optional (re)forming of coalitions, it is not a matter of a tyrant's self-will nor a matter of social agreement or democracy, respectively. *The issue is not about the relation at all.* It has been a common belief of generations of scientists and academicians that the power of knowledge is in *evidence* and *arguments.* There is certain logic in building up fundamental knowledge, conducting research and introduction in this art of (higher education) teaching, no matter how they are connected and interwoven with their social and political environment.

Therefore, political arrangement, being a consequence of the power of knowledge, is neither tyranny nor democracy, but *meritocracy.*[85] Unfortunately, the relation of Professor X to student Y in real life can sometimes be truly tyrannical, yet the sole demand of student Y that s/he be granted a positive mark in the subject taught by this Professor for this very reason is entirely unjustified from the perspective of the *power of knowledge,* the authority of argument. S/He must

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[83] »… lieu du savoir rationnel pur, lieu où la vérité doit se dire sans contrôle et sans souci d'utilité', lieu où se rassemblent le sens même et l'autonomie de l'Université, au-dessus et en dehors de la formation professionnelle: le schème architectonique de la raison pure est au-dessus et en dehors du schème technique.«

[84] The »lower faculty« is that »class of the university« which »deals only with teachings which are not accepted as a lead ordered by somebody supreme« (Kant, 1974b).

[85] As, for example, in a completely contemporary text such as the *Declaration on Human Rights*, Article 26, where one can read that »higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit«.

deserve it, which is the only academic recognition of his/her *merit.* The same also applies to the humanistic belief that the assessment of knowledge could be a matter of democratic decision-making. The power of (traditional) decision-making in this matter is exclusively on the »chef théoricien«. Consequences of the power of self-will, however, do not stem from this; this is more a consequence of epistemology. As the student cannot demand *academic* merits because of the tyrannical behaviour of the Professor, so are the Professor's *academic* merits not established by his/her individual behaviour.

Let us neglect the contribution of the empirical development of the context of the discussion about this question, in which knowledge and the university appear; i.e., legal, moral, social and other conceptions or demands of their environment. Let us stick to the entirely principled question which a well-intentioned commentator on former contemplations could ask himself: *But how to prevent acts of insanity?!* How to fundamentally prevent an obviously possible scenario according to which the supposed »theoretician-teacher« is equipped with 'power', which s/he utilises in concrete situations at the university in sharp contrast to its definition? How to prevent the existence of the *'power of self-will'* behind the *'power of knowledge'*?

It is not difficult to comprehend that a tyrannical relationship towards the student can be conditional on the Professor's entirely particular interests. On the other hand, there is the Professor's »people-friendly« relationship which would in this case transfer the power of decision-making to 'democracy', would be conditional on a complex network of particular interests surely determining the given democracy. If for the time being the empirical context is left out of our consideration, in which the university and knowledge appear, and we remain on a purely epistemological level, we must not and cannot allow ourselves to get excited. The answer is simple and comforting: the *power of knowledge is assumed in arguments.*

For this reason the place where new knowledge is created and – together with the capacity to carry out research – transferred to new generations, is not a place of privacy and particularity, but a *public* place: a place of *freedom* in the sense of Kant's »to make public use of one's reason in all matters«. »But by the public use of one's own reason I mean that use which anyone may make of it as a man of learning addressing the entire reading public« (Kant, 1974a). The institutionalised public, in which the power of knowledge is exercised, is the *University.* Except for unavoidable polemics, free public debate, enduring authorisation, it is here (according to Kant: at the 'lower faculty') where every possible question and (counter)argument can be addressed. There is no other security from the

possibility of insanity on the epistemological level. Any other security that would interfere with epistemology from the outside would endanger the »principle of reason« as the »first principle«, the further power of knowledge, the rationality of power. This is the *primary function of the autonomy of the university*.

Debates, polemics, argumentation, assured and due to be assured by »the reading public« as the community of those studying, are certainly predominantly not intended to eliminate the potential danger of insanity. Such a danger is merely an unusual hypothesis within this context. Debates are triggered by the epistemological inevitability of (double) *reflexion*. Knowledge is not only directed outwards, it is not only *knowledge about the external world*; taking into consideration Socrates' very ancient warning, it should firstly be *knowledge about knowledge*, thus (also) directed inwards, reflected. Its object is not only 'the object'; following its own logic, it must fundamentally be the object to itself. Just as film-makers' scenarios telling the story by telling the story of film-making are quite common, so too in academic spheres 'meta-level' discourses on the academic have been conducted for centuries. Inquiries about the university, its purpose, goals and all other possible problems are part of the inevitability of reflexion. Therefore, academic debate about the university is not merely professional deformation or maybe a lobbyist reflex; it is conditional on fundamental theoretical debates. Their – to a wide audience sometimes very hermetic – findings literally provoke questions again and again, such as for example 'why the university?' or 'where to, university?', and the like.

Also a modern philosophical debate about the nature of objectivity can be considered as belonging to these fundamental debates, providing some important elements to shed light on our question. According to some traditional presuppositions, the notion of the university is based on the philosophical *Idea of Truth*: the truth as an exact representation of the internal nature of reality. In a certain period this idea, so to speak, constituted philosophical and scientific disciplines and led to other important and far-reaching consequences. It also constituted the university and the hierarchy of its disciplines. The modern era shook many of these traditional presuppositions. First, doubts were raised followed by disbelief in the traditional concept of objectivity, reality, which would be independent of judgment or 'conviction' in the theory of correspondence – according to D. Davidson (1984) »idea devoid of content« – etc., reminiscent of heresies. Does this 'heresy' not ruin the epistemological grounds?! Does this not deny the 'power of knowledge'?!

With Rorty we come across an article (Rorty, 1996) in which he connects this popular theme of his with our very debate, the reflexion of the university, in an

interesting way. The debate is about presuppositions, which are comprehended by Rorty as fundamental convictions and not as »fundament« on its own, »arkhé«, »beginning«. In this article he frankly proves that *philosophical debates about the nature of truth become irrelevant to academic practices.* By analogy he adds that debates on the existence and forms of postmortal punishment are equally irrelevant to legal practices; moreover, as the legal system is incomparably more trusted in than God's providence so are our universities incomparably more trusted in than individual philosophical viewpoints about the nature of truth, objectivity or rationality. »My view of the nonpresuppositional relation of any given set of philosophical convictions to academic freedom is of a piece with President Eisenhower's famous dictum that America is firmly founded in religious belief, and that it doesn't matter which religion it is« (Rorty, 1996: 24).

When considering this we cannot ignore Rorty's viewpoint, that this is by no means the direct negation of traditional categories such as disinterest, objectivity, universality, rationality and the like. The respect for the tradition of academic freedom is not based on philosophic – or theological and the like – »presuppositions«, but on »convictions«; they can also be expressed as trust in secular values connecting us as citizens. With the secularisation of society the conviction is strengthened that personal religious views and maybe even the complete absence of such views are irrelevant to the majority of social practices. In as much as our views are a matter of our choice, still »social practices do *not* have philosophical presuppositions« (Rorty, 1996: 22).

One of Rorty's analogies states that those theologists who deny the existence of hellfire do not endanger either Christianity or morality; he and other similar pragmatic philosophers do not endanger either university or society in this respect. They think differently about all these: »if we stop trying to give epistemological justifications for academic freedom, and instead give sociopolitical justifications, we shall be both more honest and more clear-headed. We think that disinterested, objective inquiry would not only survive the adoption of our philosophical views but might survive in a desirably purified form. One result of the adoption of our views might be, for example, that physics-envy will become less prevalent, and that distinction between disciplines will no longer be drawn in phallogocentric terms, such as 'hard' and 'soft'« (Rorty, 1996: 27). Biologists and historians, he states, could stop looking down on their department colleagues who do not base their conclusions on empirical or archival facts; sociologists and psychologists, on the other hand, could stop inquiring whether they abide by strict scientific procedures and start contemplating whether they can provide their fellow citizens with something that provokes changes in their lives.

Drawing on Habermas, Rorty then sides with replacing the concept of *objectivity-as-accurate-representation* (harmony between reality and thinking) with the concept of *objectivity-as-intersubjectivity*. Rorty may be a philosopher who does not believe in reality as independent of thinking, yet he does not deny objectivity either. Objectivity as harmony with other subjects presupposes striving for such a description of reality that would satisfy certain human needs. »Moral seriousness is in treating other people seriously and in that nothing else is treated as seriously«. Thus, we do treat each other seriously, but without 'realistic' seriousness, i.e. without treating seriously the 'internal nature' of reality. In a word: »The point, we say, is not whether Christ is Really Present in the bread but whether we should treat a consecrated Host as we would a snack« (Rorty, 1996: 28).

What consequences for the understanding of the university result from such an epistemological heresy? Is it not maybe based on the very much altered 'social practices'? Does it not possibly interfere with some other level?

Disintegration of the 'Idea of the University'

The power of knowledge is the 'internal' power of the university as a rationally grounded institution, as an institution at the source of science and knowledge. We may also speak about the relation of 'external' power to the university, science and knowledge. On one hand, the relation of the university to political institutions is mentioned especially often, as are relations to the institutions of civil society, or to the churches, and increasingly to the economic sphere . At this point, as a rule all the debates about the *autonomy of the university* and about the need to limit external powers in relation to the power of knowledge. The autonomy of the university is its internal power in relation to external powers.

But the comprehension of its own power is also conditional on the status of external powers, which is finally proved by the changes brought about, for example, in the 'transition' period. Surely *thinking* in relation to the everyday objective world is not another planet, let alone another sovereign state. *Knowing about fundamental principles* may be epistemologically-hierarchically high above *knowledge about the everyday useful,* but in neither variant is it as high as to interrupt their mutual relationship. There is no point in exposing problems about the non-useful, non-interesting nature of theoretical knowing and its assurance from whatever demands practical capabilities. In some special way, through history the university has been a 'non-useful' and privileged place endangered and therefore in need of constant protection and assurance.

Derrida states that »neither in its medieval nor in its modern form university disposed of absolute autonomy and rigorous conditions of its unity«.[86] In his opinion, for eight centuries »University« stood for a name which human society intended for »some sort of a supplementary body, which it at the same time wanted to project outside itself and jealously guard in itself, to emancipate and to control«.[87] In those two roles, the university was considered to represent society which, in fact, it was doing. In its relative autonomy »cet artefact universitaire« was considering society by obtaining »the possibility of reflexion, consequently also *dissociation*. The period of reflexion means not only that the internal rhythm of the university mechanism is relatively independent of social time and that the urgency of command is loosened for it, enabling it a great and precious freedom of play. A vacant place for a chance. Turning the inner pocket. The time of reflexion is also the possibility to return to the conditions of reflexion in every meaning of this word«;[88] it is »telescoping the view« itself (Derrida, 1990: 26-27).

The thematic of the autonomy of the university – conducted almost millennially – should be treated with more respect than we pay in our conviction that this conception ought be used on the cutting edge of actuality. Debates about the autonomy of the university, witnessed at the end of the 20th century (in especially exciting forms after the fall of the Berlin wall had resulted in a tremendous accumulation of more or less undisputed experiences and viewpoints), despite the heterogeneous historical contexts from which individual participants come and also regardless of the heterogeneous viewpoints they defend, as a rule drawing on some common point in the historical development of the university as an institution. We are referring to the period denoted by debates about 'the Idea of the University', inspired deep in the atmosphere of German classical philosophy, mostly distinguished by the name of Wilhelm von Humboldt. This concept has a long history and can be dealt with within different contexts. The expression 'the autonomy of the university' is at least in 'societies in transition' pursued mainly in relation to the (political) state.

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[86] »… ni dans sa forme médiévale, ni dans sa forme moderne, l'Université n'a disposé de son autonomie absolue et des conditions rigoureuses de son unite.«

[87] »… à une sorte de corps supplémentaire qu'elle a voulu à la fois projeter hors d'elle-même et garder jalousement en elle-même, émanciper et controller.«

[88] »… la chance de la réflexion, c'est-à-dire aussi *dissociation*. Le temps de la réflexion, ici, cela ne signifie pas seulement que le rythme interne de dispositif universitaire est relativement indépendant du temps social et détend l'urgence de la commande, lui assure une grande et précieuse liberté de jeu. Une place vide pour la chance. L'invagination d'une poche intérieure. Le temps de la réflexion, c'est aussi la chance d'un retour sur les conditions mêmes de la réflexion, a tous les sens de ce mot«.

The common ground of debates about 'the Idea of the University' was the conviction that the quest for the truth and the creation of knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) was incompatible with politics and at the same time completely different from other cultural activities. The time at the turn of the 18th century into the 19th century assigned the university a new double role. The more the era of Enlightenment expanded in history, the clearer it was that *modern science and knowledge* had finally freed themselves from the tutorship of the church. Some external power, significant for centuries, dissociated and this change was crucial for restructuring the conception of autonomy, for redefining the relation between the power of knowledge and external powers. In the circumstances of that time science and knowledge were institutionalised anew, assuming that their autonomy should be neither endangered by (a modern) state which otherwise assures external circumstances for their operation nor by a (heterogeneous and still undeveloped) civil society in need of their results. This assumption demanded arguments that had to prove that it is in the interest of the state as well as of civil society that the university retains its internal freedom in full.[89]

What are the key moments in this argument? Firstly, the university is an 'apolitical' institution, withdrawn from the public and political spheres yet at the same time the relation of the knowledge built up there to the state and society is affirmative. The university is consequently state-constitutory, but also national-defensive.[90] It is well aware that as an institution it is obliged to protect its own profession and its historically gained status from potentially inappropriate or dangerous external influences; this is particularly true of the demand for interaction between research work and teaching. The next important moment, as already indicated, was when the central role was attributed to the philosophical faculty (a little earlier, in Kant's time this was the 'lower' faculty, involved in a complex dispute with the three 'upper' ones) as being a decisive factor in the formation of cultures; moreover, it was the point at which the 'principle of reason' revealed itself, having been assisted by the context of German classic philosophy, to establish itself as a *spirit, totality.* Considering the historic particularities this argument defends a quite pure rationalist viewpoint.

Also with Habermas we come across an interesting article (Habermas, 1987), directly pointing at the reflexion of the university. And which philosophical au-

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[89] Basically, this was also Immanuel Kant's argument in his *Conflict of the Faculties* (1794).

[90] That is especially true in 'middle' Europe where the conception 'national university' is remembered: science and the study of humanities in a nation's own language were a state-constituent element in the process of the emergence of nation-states in the 19th and 20th centuries.

thority would be more suitable to assist in analysing the debate on the (German) 'Idea of University'? Scientific process, originating in German classical philosophy as a concept, is described as »narcissistically self-enclosed process of research and teaching« (Habermas, 1987: 10) by Habermas. The very thing that unites the university as a whole and serves as its foundation, yet at the same time justifies its relation towards the external world, is *philosophy as an encyclopaedic science.* A philosophy secures the sole *unity of science* and all members of the university, regardless of the faculty they belong to, ought to proceed from the starting-point in philosophy, as Schleiermacher claimed. Encompassing its time in thoughts as can be borrowed from Hegel philosophy took over the integrative social functions that once belonged to religion. Therefore, in the era of romanticism the university is not only a source of knowledge but also a source of Enlightenment, general education, culture, nation and an emancipated future society. It is not only the power of knowledge – in its programme it declares much more: the power of knowledge spreading its influence consciously into the external world on behalf of its mission. Habermas talks about »the totalizing power of the scientific process« (Habermas, 1987: 15).

Integrative social functions, which in this philosophical programme are taken over by science and knowledge, led the Prussian reformers of the university to *a request for four unities:* first, the unity of research work and teaching, implying already the second one, the unity of science and general education, and the broader unity of science and Enlightenment as the third unity; finally the unity of scientific disciplines. »These institutional preconditions for an implementation of the fundamental idea of the German university were either non-existent from the start, or they became ever less capable of fulfilment during the course of the 19th century« (Habermas, 1987: 12).

Here Habermas analyses four moments brought forward in the 19th century. First, the ever more *differentiated vocational system* demanded scientific and professional education for an increasingly greater variety of academic professions (technical faculties, business schools, teacher colleges and art academies) could not remain outside the university forever. *The development of empirical sciences* (»which had emerged from the womb of the philosophical faculty«) contradicted – even in the sociological and humanistic field – the concept of an all-embracing philosophical encyclopaedia and »in the midst of a pluralism of privatized religious beliefs, philosophy also lost its monopoly on interpreting culture as a whole« (Habermas, 1987: 12). On the other hand, in nascent industrial society science developed fast and reached the status of an important production power; natural

science abandoned shaping the world view and declared itself in favour of the *production of technically applicable knowledge.* Finally*, the social stratus of highly educated citizenry*, close to the image of a higher state clerk, with which neither the universalism of 'the Idea of the University' nor the programme promise of the general social emancipation were kept.

The twentieth century actually did not contribute anything much new to the process of dissociation of 'the Idea of the University'; i.e., to the difficulties in its inner coherence and to the problems with the argument of the principle of autonomy in relation to external power. Problems which »the totalizing power of the scientific process« has to face inwards due to the ever greater diversification of disciplines and pluralisation of scientific discourses, also tend increasingly to turn convex. Academic education, so closely attached to the power of knowledge, to the beginning, the principle of reason, unusefulness etc., is more and more interwoven with the imperatives and dynamics of vocational systems (Donald, 1990: 145-150), while academic research is becoming more closely connected to the dynamics and imperatives of the industrial complex, together with its armament component (Mayor and Forti, 1995: 138-146). In the systems of higher education turbulent processes are obviously employed, which at the turn of millennium are even more intensified, for example in the Bologna Process; evaluations that this is an expression of a 'complete failure of the traditional continental concept' and the oncoming of the new 'globalistic concept of the university' are not unknown.

To understand all these processes as 'conspiracy' against the power of knowledge, as breaking into the academic sphere and as the decline of the principle of autonomy, would be paranoid. As Rorty proposed before (i.e., instead of dubious presuppositions let us derive from the conviction that it is reasonable to trust the principle), so also after the analysis of these historical processes, it is not possible to draw conclusions in a defeatist manner, that the principle of the autonomy of the university ought to be abandoned and the grand and precious freedom of play consequently rejected »une grande et précieuse liberté de jeu« as Derrida wrote. With logic that should not be unfamiliar to scientific considerations, such processes only draw attention to the fact that argumentation inherited from the beginning of the ninetieth century and sometimes still applied as being self-evident is at least questionable, if not disputable.

Habermas also analyses the post-war development of the German university in an interesting way; even though this analysis may be of great interest we will not pay any more attention to it as, according to the perceived trend, it would not lead to any important new moment. However, it does end with an important

question: »But if the inner integrity of the university cannot be saved even under these revised premises, mustn't we admit that this institution can get along perfectly well without that fond notion it once had of itself? Does anything remain upon which an integrating self-understanding of universities could be founded?« (Habermas, 1987: 18).

In response to himself Habermas cites Parsons (*The American University*, 1973), in whose opinion modern higher education systems simultaneously perform *four functions*: research work and the training of new scientists, academic preparation for professional careers and the creation of technically applicable knowledge, general education, and, finally, contributing to cultural self-understanding and intellectual enlightenment. The first three functions are exercised by the whole cascade of higher education institutions, from the university to its departments and chairs; the last should be connected with the (non-institutional) role of professors as intellectuals.

At this point, Habermas reminds us of the resemblance to the four »unities« of the former Prussian reformers of the university, whereby he warns that a certain radical change has been brought about: the contemporary open and differentiated abundance of scientific disciplines is far from »the totalizing power of the scientific process«, which used to combine all these functions into a unity. »It is rather the very form of organizing scientific learning processes in the medium of academic discourse which still roots the highly differentiated and specialized disciplines in the life world via the simultaneous fulfilment of those various functions« (Habermas, 1987: 20). The differentiation of specific areas surely presupposes differentiation within the university in a broader sense. Different groups with different interests attribute varying degrees of importance to the different functions of the university: in one place they distinctively emphasise research, in another professional formation; only part of the academic community will always be uncompromisingly prepared to bet on cultural self-understanding etc.

In this way, in Habermas' opinion the former predominant »corporative consciousness« is softened into »intersubjectively shared consciousness«: despite every one of us doing something else, all of us together perform not only one but a whole complex of functions. The fact that functions remain connected is not to be ascribed to the normative ideal of a 'perfect' university any longer. The very thing uniting the processes of learning together now in their different functions is communicative or discursive forms of scientific argumentation (see Habermas, 1987: 21). The idea about the study »in solitude and freedom« (ibid., 10) is today a pure illusion; the process of learning is inevitably a constituent

part of public communication, which is confirmed by professional associations, conferences, newspapers, the Internet and, last but not least, study programmes. The community of researchers, the community of learners is a *public sphere in which free and equal participants communicate without any domination.* In this context the university – defined as the *community* of students and professors – remains topical and so does its *autonomy.*

Such a standpoint produces some more consequences for the analysis of the question of the internal relations of power at the university.

Meritocracy and democracy: knowledge and social relations

Contemplations about the relation between knowledge and power on these grounds are now once again transferred inwards. Taking into account the presented arguments and the indicated historical context we ourselves pose some not unknown questions. What is the relation between the internal university structure of power and the internal university democracy? Do processes in the external world influence these relations? *Is it possible to democratise the university?* If so, with what arguments?

Before we try to answer some of these questions, let us summarise the story which was experienced after the era of Enlightenment: modern science finally freed itself from the tutorship of the Church (let us leave aside the relationship with the modern nation-state at this point). The vanishing of this traditional institutional 'external power' was co-conditional on the restructuring of the conception of autonomy of that time. So this vanishing in the totality of historical processes influenced the redefinition of the relation between the power of knowledge and 'external powers' – the redefinition of autonomy. One could say that the logic of this story in Central and Eastern Europe in 1990 and after that repeated in some special way. This region also experienced a disappearance of institutional external power (i.e., a centralised one-party state), which not only caused a redefinition but in some societies actually caused the reconstitution of the autonomy of the university.

Following the theory of a pendulum, which quite proverbially explains the social processes of 'the countries in transition', among the arguments old and outmoded forms returned rather than being strengthened by the results of contemporary theoretical reflexions. The worse the position of the university in relation to (former) institutions of 'external power' was, the more categorically the demand for autonomy has now been announced. Also arguments for

autonomy seemed to be self-evident, non-problematic, including those that dyslexically turned *autonomy* into *autarky*.[91] The global world turned around at that time and we could witness the general re-establishment of new balances of power. Why would any specific part of the world be an exception? However, the re-establishment of academic power took very special paths in former socialist countries.

Whereas in one part of the world »corporative consciousness« softened into »intersubjectively shared consciousness«, in the other part of the world right in the very processes corporativism experienced a new prosperity period.[92] With this I do not deny the importance of the issue of the autonomy of the university in this 'overturn'. Experiences from my country, Slovenia, were in this perspective certainly away from the extremes, yet they added at least the interpretation to those contradictory discourses in their own way, which changed the – not the most skilfully written – constitutional norm »*State universities and other institutions of higher education shall be autonomous*«[93] into a specific constitutional-legal paradox: if they are *state* institutions, how can they be *autonomous*? Thus, not only the relationship between the university and the state had to be reconsidered in the new circumstances but also the differentiation between '*state*' and '*public*' had to be addressed. It seems that the two words that were the most difficult to learn were *accountability* and *public responsibility*. The university, which was finally freed from pressures of the state ideology, quite often reacted in two – only at first blush contradictory – ways: as an ivory tower far away from the 'external world' and fully irresponsible for it as well as a new agent in the 'market' advertising best services for young people on their way to 'a new future'.

Yet all these questions do not only raise the problematic of relations of the university towards 'external powers' and an endless debate about academic autonomy, respectively. These issues, together with those already outlined earlier in this chapter, point to important questions about the *internal distribution of power in the university*. In the first part of the chapter the epistemological level was presented, in which »chief-theoretician«, »theoretician-teacher« is established.

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[91] See the concluding part of the previous chapter, pp. xxx.

[92] E.g., the representation of students or junior faculty in academic bodies, which was also attained in these countries in past decades and was often attained through conflicts with 'external power', vanished from the structures of 'internal power' in many places (temporarily) after 1990. In Slovenia, for example, junior faculty and students could not be members of university senates (and respective faculty bodies) until the law was amended in 1999.

[93] *Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia* (1990), Article 58. There were heated discussions on the autonomy of the university and its relation to the state in the 1990s ('a fully autonomous university') which only ended before the Constitutional Court in 1998. The Court stated: »A fully autonomous social subsystem is an intrinsically contradictory notion: if it is fully autonomous, then it is no longer social neither a subsystem«.

Knowledge is based on *arguments.* The professor has *merits;* according to the defi-nition (presupposition*)* that s/he possesses arguments s/he introduces us to their (appropriate) utilisation and checks whether we use them properly. Therefore, it is impossible to negotiate here; it is possible only to argue about knowledge.

At the same time, knowledge presupposes some hierarchy (»theoretical-polit-ical hierarchy«); a rationalistic standpoint inherently already comprises political (as well as social, ethical etc.) philosophy. It is not decent at all and would not be in accordance with broadly accepted principles, yet it is practically quite possible that a professor when moving from theoretical contemplation to real relationships with students proves to be a tyrant. It is also neither decent nor in accordance with accepted principles, yet very much possible, that a tyrannical relationship be established in the academic hierarchy, for instance between younger and older teachers or in the relationship between the Chancellor and his or her 'subordi-nates'. But with scientific merits justified behaviour can be treated with ridicule immediately when 'the chief' leaves the laboratory in which s/he deserved the merits. Yet, the very same logic can be projected in 'people-friendly relationships' and that neither democratic nor tyrannical relationships can be justified from the perspective of the power of knowledge. What does justify them then? Not the *power of knowledge*, but some *other relations of power*?

Let us recall the dispute between the rationalists (»representationalists«) and their opponents, the contemporary pragmatists: the dispute between the stand-point that the Western rationalistic tradition also possesses a moral and social character in itself and the viewpoint that such a connection is totally irrelevant. »Which side are you on?« For Rorty, such questioning seems an inappropriate loss of time and a sap of emotional energies: »It would be better to distinguish the ethics of the academy – the customs and practices that help to determine the attitude of students to books, faculty to students, administrators to faculty and donors, and so on – from the private theological or philosophical convictions of any of the persons involved« (Rorty, 1996: 32).

Rorty consequently proposes that in such cases we proceed from (subjec-tive) 'convictions' and not from (supposedly objective) 'presuppositions'. It is undoubtedly true that these convictions are not the internal product of the university, as this could be true for (theoretical) presuppositions, yet they are a product of 'external agents', society and culture, widely shared conceptions and value consensuses or at least a value pluralism to which the university in all its functions willingly or unwillingly permanently contributes. According to some testimony, one of the causal factors of *May '68* was in some places the entirely

banal limitation of night visits between female and male students in dormitories (at that time maybe a reaction to the old-fashioned 'what is too much, really is too much'). Had anyone at that time done his best to justify this prohibition *epistemologically*, for example using the 'power of knowledge', this theoretical 'presupposition' in relation to empirical convictions of female and male students would not have been any more convincing than would have been the argument that the public corporal punishment of students belonged to the context of the principle of the autonomy of the university, that it drew on traditions and that it had nothing to do with either the *Declaration on Human Rights* or the national legislations of today.

Democracy at the university cannot be justified by the 'power of knowledge'. This may also be true for the principles of the autonomy of the university and academic freedom (the execution of this thesis should be left open for some other debate). Its foundation can only be a *communicative society*, a community of researchers, a community of learners in which the participants are free and equal according to the principle of communication without domination. In this sense, it is only possible to recommend to differentiate between the *power of knowledge* (as power which is an argument and not an inter-subjective relation; but it can really be conditional on it one way or another, for instance when the authority of the argument is transferred to the authority of the teacher) and the *power as structuring real social and/or political relations.*

We have mentioned the fictitious and (from the viewpoint of argumentation) impossible demand of a student to be granted a positive mark because of their tyrannical examiner. The demand can become justified when we comprehend that it does not concern *the content of knowledge*, argumentation, and the like, but *its form:* when concerning *the process and procedure* in which knowledge is created. This is not independent of processes going on outside the walls of the university – society at large. Yet its definition and the replacement of the private caprices of teachers with transparent rules do not in any way endanger either the university or its autonomy. It is only the answer to the question of how to prevent possible insanities and arises from some other non-epistemological level. And this level should be seriously regarded as the first.

CHAPTER 6

Higher education as a public responsibility

Several issues have been addressed in previous chapters which now call for further elaboration. Close to the end, we will try to synthesise some of them by focusing on the concept of *public responsibility* in relation to *higher education*. Two dimensions should be taken into account: public responsibility *for* higher education as well as public responsibility *of* higher education. They are closely related to popular understandings and argumentation concerning what the main mission of higher education in our societies should be.

It would be interesting to one day undertake a detailed survey of how this mission (i.e. the role; function; position in society etc.) of higher education is perceived in contemporary societies. We may guess that the prevailing perception can be characterised by key words like 'training (concrete) skills', 'raising income', 'better employment', 'competitive economy' etc. There is much more 'life realism' and 'facts' than values in such a perception, isn't there? If it were true then it would not only be a mere reflection of 'affluent society', as some people usually complain about other viewpoints. Indeed, in part this range of words can be explained as a reflection of individual positions in today's (global) labour market, that is, as a 'subjective' reflection of 'hard everyday life'.

On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that it can also partly be a product of the modern *concept of science*, that is, a product of the discourse regarding 'objectivity' and 'truth', cleaned of any 'subjective presumptions'. Higher education is one of the privileged 'places of science' nowadays as well as a subsystem established to transmit and deliver new knowledge across modern societies. Knowledge societies, as we like to stress today.

However, if we were to ask respondents in an interview more about their perceptions we would probably get a new set of key words, something like this:

'broadening access', 'training concrete skills to empower the individual', 'enhancing the quality of life'; 'employment' and 'the economy' would be connected to 'society' and 'cohesion' etc. Now, we should not forget that *asking* (i.e. calling for arguments) has always been an important component of education and scholarship and an important method of searching for truth as well. Actually, searching for the *truth* is not only about discovering *facts* but it is also about searching for *values* if we only remind ourselves of Socrates and the rich traditions established upon his ideas during the last two and a half millennia.

Higher education has played a multiple role in society since its origins: it has always been an agent of scientific, technological, economic etc. development; at the same time it has also been a place of individual shaping and cultural development in the broadest sense; last but not least, it has been a site of citizenship and democratic culture as we define it today. It is impossible to separate these entire dimensions one from another. What constitutes higher education is precisely the totality of its proven multiple role.

Higher education, responsibility and democracy

Within this context, it will probably be easier to grasp the relationship between higher education and (public) responsibility. It is obvious that there should always be some kind of responsibility *for higher education* (i.e. access,[94] financing, legal framework, respecting autonomy etc.) from society and/or its organisations if we expect 'results', that is, the effective performance of its multiple role. Similarly, there should always be some kind of responsibility *of higher education*: not only with regard to its specific performance (i.e. accountability, public funds etc.) but also with regard to issues like the ethical dimension of the search for truth etc. Yet, how are we to understand the relationship between higher education and democracy in this context?

Today, the field of democratic culture is probably the most appropriate place where public responsibility *for* higher education and public responsibility *of*

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[94] Access to higher education and democracy have much in common; even if this relationship is expressed in a negative way. Just a few examples follow.

»In the German Reich between 1933 and 1939, the number of students had been cut in half, dropping from 121,000 to 56,000. In 1945, in the area later to become the Federal Republic, only 15 universities were left to existence. […] In the early 1960s, the course was set for a deliberate expansion of the post-secondary educational sector, and since that time the number of students has quadrupled« (Habermas, 1987: 5).

»Before the revolution of 1989, higher education and research in the communist world were pampered and privileged, but not free. I think it is quite important to remember this fact« (Campbell and Dahrendorf, 1994: 8).

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, »the numbers of postsecondary students dropped precipitously from 674,400 to 47,800« (Robinson, 2005). Today, »[t]here are […] 11 million [students] in higher education« (Country Report China, in: ACA 2005: 3).

higher education can meet one another. This is the point where universities and other higher education institutions can make important contributions based upon epistemological grounds (e.g. criticism and rational reasoning etc.), upon specific fields of study (e.g. social studies, history, education etc.) or upon their 'inner' or institutional practice of democratic culture (e.g. in terms of institutional governance, student involvement, relations with the environment etc.). This is also the point where public authorities should strive to provide good conditions (e.g. legislation, financing etc.) on one hand, that is to enable institutions to cope successfully with these challenges yet also, on the other hand, to enable not only the transfer and dissemination of technologically and economically valuable results but also the transfer and dissemination of results which can contribute importantly to strengthening democratic culture in modern societies at large.

Contemporary discussions of democracy and related issues show deep shifts in the traditional concepts we know from the 20th century. In this context, the idea of (higher) *education for democratic citizenship* ('EDC') was born and has received ever more attention as well as importance.[95] Analysing the arguments in these discussions Kelly synthesises two streams of interpretation of the increased contemporary 'burgeoning interest' in 'education for citizenship':

> (1) »*extensive changes which have been occurring in the social fabric of western societies in recent years*«; and

> (2) »*citizenship is coming to be regarded as a possible source of cures for what are seen as the ills that are increasingly besetting modern society*« (Kelly, 1995: 182).96

On the other side, Audigier ascertains that the terms 'citizen' or 'citizenship' have changed and have entered new contexts; even more, he states an increasing concern for the citizenship and citizenship education in recent times;

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[95] See e.g. EDC pages http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural%5FCo%2Doperation/education/E%2ED%2EC/.

[96] See further (183): »At one extreme the view has been expressed that, since those changes in the fabric of society which we noted earlier, allied to those intellectual changes subsumed under the term postmodernism, have led to a fragmentation of culture and of society, and a corresponding loss of any serious idea of common interests, to seek for some unifying concept such as citizenship is to take on a lost cause (Wexler, 1990). As we have seen, however, to adopt such a view is to see democracy too as a lost cause. At the other extreme there have been those who have recognized the significance of these changes, and have acknowledged the tensions they are creating, but have accepted a concept of citizenship as providing a new unifying factor (Heater, 1990; Gilbert, 1992).«

»the affirmation and extension of the term "citizenship" are recent developments«
(Audigier, 2000: 5).[97]

Is the idea of a democratic culture and its relation to (higher) education a
(post)modern one and is it divorced from any tradition or heritage?

Historical roots

It is always shocking when we find with ancient authors some clear ideas that
we had strictly considered only to be modern or even postmodern concepts.
Thus, Aristotle says in *The Politics* (Aristotle, 1992; 1337a11):

> *»just as there must also be preparatory training for all skills and capacities, and
> a process of preliminary habituation to the work of each profession, it is obvious
> that there must also be training for the activities of virtue«.*

Further, he states in the continuation of the same paragraph:

> *»But since there is but one aim for the entire state, it follows that education must
> be one and the same for all, and that the responsibility for it must be a public
> one, not the private affaire which it now is«.*

Thus, he opened a discussion (of course, within an ancient context) which is,
after two and a half millennia, only more complex, intensive and important than
it was at the beginning. On one hand, today (higher) education is the most reliable
tool for the promotion of any individual in modern societies and the issue of the
upmost 'private affaire'. On the other hand, the role and function of (higher) educa-
tion has never been reduced to this dimension only; it has also always been provid-
ing »training for the activities of virtue« in the broadest sense: economic wealth
and cultural development, better technological support *and* better health care, less
illness and other troubles etc. Finally, critical thinking *and* democratic awareness
have also been more or less directly connected with (*higher*) *education*. These are
substantial reasons why »the responsibility for it must be a public one«.

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[97] See further (6-7): »The relatively recent (re)emergence of the term "citizen" would thus be a way of going back to
the question of "living together", a question which had more or less been forgotten in democratic States for some
decades, but is now arising very acutely again under the pressure of various factors: exclusion of a growing propor-
tion of the population, extension of the globalisation of economies and cultures, the latter disseminated through the
international media, calling into question of the political references of the past two centuries in Europe, such as the
Nation-State, and the more recent social dimension of Welfare State, risks of ethnic fragmentation and the growth
of exclusive specificities, challenges to the basic values of our societies, the phenomena of racism and xenophobia,
etc.«

However, it is not easy to define »the activities of virtue« in which one should be trained; it is even not so easy to define 'public' and 'responsibility' in more depth. Ethics, social and political philosophy have always had much work to do in defining these ideas. The bitter experiences of the past – not always only of the far past – prove that (higher) education can also be involved as a mechanism of ideologically secured social reproduction: it has always happened when the unrelenting *Supreme Virtue* and the unquestioned *Hegemon* put in the shade and/or eliminate the constant rational dispute regarding human virtue(s) and social relationship(s). The *dispute on truth and virtue* has, in fact, been an important part of academic traditions and at least indirectly also an intellectual source of democratic culture.

Democracy and culture

Do 'postmodern' times split off circumstances which had been interlacing academia and science into 'external' power structures, Ideology and Myth? Has the eternal devil finally been beaten down? This could be dangerous questioning, conserving not the content but *the form of understanding* which, in fact, belongs to the suspected – and supposedly beaten – discourse.[98] Living in the deeply changed social circumstances of the beginning of the 21st century we may today be happy enough to split off inhumanities of the past but we should not forget the past – for the sake of our present and future.[99] It has not only happened once that an important political (e.g. political processes of the turn from the 1980s to the 1990s) or technological (e.g. development of communication technologies) change and 'the progress' achieved only took a step towards encountering new problems; sooner or later it has usually become clear that any historical step or achievement should be observed and treated in the most complex way possible.

In this way, »developments throughout the 1990s underlined that institutions and laws are necessary but not sufficient preconditions for a functioning democracy, and that democratic society can only function if it is built on democratic culture«

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[98] »While universities do in my view have a democratic mission, we should not fall into the trap of thinking this is because academia is inherently democratic. It is, unfortunately, not difficult to think to examples where both institutions and individual academics have been profoundly undemocratic and where they have contributed to man's inhumanity to man« (Bergan, 2003: 39-40).

[99] Unfortunately, it is not only a question of time periods (e.g. past vs. present and future) but also a question of geographical spaces in relation to social development. One of the popular slogans of 1968 was that 'Vietnam begins in our suburbs'. The name of the country has lost the special connotation of those times; yet, the message as such is even truer today.

(Bergan, 2004: 6). Experience from Central and Eastern Europe show that many higher education institutions have been profoundly reformed on the basis of new legislation adopted after political changes but that a longer period of time has been needed for 'the reconciliation'. Even more, new issues have grown up during this 'transition' period, quite often overgrowing the initial problem. Of course, examples from other countries can also be found to prove a common and relatively simple truth: not only that enrooting new legal norms in the everyday functioning of institutions is *a process* but also that legal norms and institutions depend on everyday people's practices, their *culture*. Yet, the distinctive feature of (higher) education is that it encompasses *a process of transferring and changing culture patterns*.

We encounter a particular paradox today which is far from being particular to higher education alone; it refers to our societies at large: as formal possibilities for people (students) to engage and participate in society and in (higher education) institutions are becoming greater, less people are actually practising them. Participation at national parliamentary elections (or as we can also learn from the last elections to the European Parliament) in almost all countries can only seem shocking from the point of view of brave fighters for democracy from the past, and students' participation in the election of their representatives at universities could seem even more shocking compared with the student rebellions and political demands seen in 1968.

There are not many figures on student participation in the governance of higher education in Europe, at least not as many as e.g. in the case of student mobility. In one of the rare surveys on this issue, Annika Persson reports: »The average percentage of students participating in the election of student representatives to university bodies or student organizations varies greatly between countries, regions, institutions and levels of governance. The bracket most frequently indicated is that between 16 and 30 percent, followed by the interval just below (0 to 15 percent)« (Persson, 2003: 9).

On the other side, the so-called *Trends* reports provide some data on student participation in the Bologna reforms at institutional levels. The *Trends III* reported that »[a]t 63% of universities in Bologna signatory countries, students have been formally involved in the Bologna Process, i.e. through participation in the senate or council or at faculty/departmental level« (Reichert and Tauch, 2003: 25). Four years later, the *Trends V* report brought even more optimistic picture: »There has been a positive development since 2003 […]. An increase in student participation of more than 10% overall has taken place, the most significant change being a 16% increase in central participation«. However »[w]hile improvement has taken

place since then [a reference to the *Trends III* report, 2003], this remains weakest at faculty/departmental level« (Crossier, Purser and Smidt, 2007: 52).

Within this context, it is not a marginal note at all when students say that »[e]*xcept for a few experts, hardly anyone sees and implements the whole number of instruments and measures of the Bologna Process. Only technical or virtual changes take place, there seems to be no interest in a qualitative reform of study programmes*« (Reichert and Tauch, 2003: 25).

Democracy, culture and indifference

Reflecting these processes, can we also discuss culture in this context as a *culture of democratic indifference*, perhaps as a *culture of indifference to democracy*? More or less, we are all aware of this paradoxical fact but it is really very difficult to establish a sound argument to overcome the modern liberal attitude that it is totally up to the individual whether to practice his/her civil rights or not. Sharing this attitude, however, it should be clear that we cannot remain indifferent.[100] It seems obvious that this could be a point of encountering serious new problems; and these problems are also related to (higher) education.

Here, we should refer to the results of a recent interesting project realised in the framework of the Council of Europe's activities: *the Plantan Report* (Plantan, 2002). The project confirmed and gave much new evidence that the formal provision of shared governance and the protection of faculty and student rights at our universities are often at odds with actual practices. It has again been proven that »[f]ormal institutional structures and arrangements are a *necessary*, but *not sufficient* condition for […] greater democratic participation; […] the promotion of aims and objectives of instilling notions of civic responsibility within students; […] understanding the nature and extent of a university's interaction with its surrounding community; and […] curricular change and altering the management functions within the university« (Plantan, 2002: 12-13).

The report demonstrates that participation in the governance of our universities of today is not what might be hoped for and expected, that students mostly do not know enough about their rights and that faculty often do not find reasons and do not know arguments to connect higher education and democracy.[101] The

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[100] Cf. Kelly: »the ills that are increasingly besetting modern society« (Kelly, 1995: 182).

[101] »As a corollary to the previous point, most university administrators and faculty considered institutional responses to promoting democratic values and civic engagement as an infringement upon or a dilution of the university's primary educational mission, such as the training of specialists and technicians and other professionals.« – »Faculty surveyed constantly contested the idea that universities must stimulate democracy among students« (Plantan, 2002: 13, 47).

scale of the problem is quite complex. One of Plantan's important conclusions we find at the end of the report is that »[t]his suggests that the promotion of democratic values and civil responsibility is not merely a pedagogical question, but must also be addressed structurally in terms of the organization and practice of university governance« (Plantan, 2002: 49).

If today we consider »the promotion of democratic values and civil responsibility« as »a pedagogical question« in the *traditional sense*, that is e.g. as 'imparting' values and feeling for responsibility (i.e., to indoctrinate),[102] there would not be much of a chance to convince students nor faculty. We support Plantan's statement that the issue is not merely a pedagogical one and that it is intertwined with the organisation and practice of university governance: in today's culture, democratic values and feeling for responsibility cannot be 'imparted' but one should get certain knowledge and skills as well as empowerment or chances to practice them independently in the everyday life of the institution (university) and broader societal environment.

However, we believe that the complex scale of the problem is even broader and also encompasses – besides *pedagogy* and *governance* – *epistemology*. If there is a certain reservation or contest or refusal from faculty today that universities must stimulate democracy among students then there are at least two levels of explanation: (a) various but always *unpleasant experiences of 'imparting' practices* as well as jealousy retaining to the freedom of teaching and research; and (b) the epistemological grounds of university teaching and research, that is, *disinterested scholarship*.

Democratic society, communicative society

This seems to be one of the central points of discussing the relationship between higher education and democracy in modern times. Traditionally, university teaching and academic life in general has been developed as a kind of meritocracy, as the *power of knowledge*. Yet, the idea and reality of the university have undergone deep changes, influenced by society at large, politics, the economy and culture. As we argued already in the previous chapter, today democracy at the university cannot be justified by the power of knowledge; we stated that its foundation can only be a 'communicative society', a community of researchers, a community of learners, in which the participants are free and equal according to the principle of communication without domination.

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[102] Lat. *in-* into / *doctrinare* teach. Reflecting these relations, universities would probably gain interesting new initiatives from reinventing the 'teach-in' practice as developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

In other words, democracy at the university of today cannot be an 'imposed' or 'imparted' value. That would be against epistemological grounds and scientific discourse as well as against the norms of modern democratic societies. In particular, it is necessary to stress that not only norms of modern *democratic* societies but also the epistemology of the age of modern *communicative* society argue for the same option: *democracy is not an extrinsic supplement to (higher) education but it is its complex inner value.*

Higher education at various stages of its historical development contributed to the science, culture and society at large; in their searching for the lost European university identity many contemporary authors recognise this contribution as an extraordinary potential. However, they also warn that we are living in new times and that answers from these former stages – despite their incontestable importance – cannot contribute actively to coping with modern problems. The university needs a new identity to reactivate this potential again.

During its millennium the university has found itself in crises more than once. It was such a case at the dawn of modernity when von Humboldt conceived the new formula (the university as a unity of knowledge; teaching through research; corporative organisation) which proved its strength and influenced European countries and globally for two centuries. However, »[o]ccasionally viewed with nostalgia, the Humboldt model could never be redesigned to meet contemporary needs« (Renaut, 2002: 125). As the university before von Humboldt's invention was challenged by fragmentation and the loss of its societal influence it is today challenged to new fragmentation and loss: pressuring demands of the economy, competition, increasing specialisation, postmodern absence of an entire concept of human knowledge. In parallel to this, this process appears in new circumstances of European integration, increased economic, educational, scientific and cultural co-operation, global communication and interdependence.

In searching for the new university identity in these new contexts Alain Renaut proposes an interesting approach: »that the unity which constitutes the aims and purposes of the university since its invention by Europe could be reinterpreted today as being that of a culture«.[103] Renaut refers here to a *European citizenship*; it seems self-evident to us that this statement also subsumes the notion of a *democratic culture.*

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[103] See further (126): »If Europe, as is often repeated these days, is not to be confined to the euro, one way of enhancing the existing economic and financial union and making it less soulless could be for our universities to make a genuine contribution to the establishment of a common European culture.« The next paragraph ends with an important and inspiring question: »has the time not come to include in at least the first phases of higher education the cultural requirements necessary to create a European citizenship?«

Opening the 'social dimension' in European higher education policy

Today, there is a lot of consensus on the indispensable role education in general and higher education in particular can play in developing and maintaining a democratic culture. This role is connected to the issues of higher education policy as we can also see in recent documents adopted on the national and international levels. The challenges of the time have put higher education in the middle of *global competition* processes; new problems encountered in this way prove ever more convincingly that its position in a local and/or global *culture of co-operation* is now even more important. European countries have become aware that the potential of their universities – as European, not just national universities – depends more and more on their increased co-operation as well as on the transparency and compatibility of national higher education systems. A reform of higher education structures is a 'natural' result of this awareness; however, it is not observed *instrumentally* only but in relation to shared *basic values* as well.

This development can easily be seen in the Bologna Process. In the circumstances of the late 1990s, a document as important as the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) stated as follows: »The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies in universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe.« Yet, some might argue that this was a typical political statement similar to what also appeared in other documents of those times. Similar discourse was again used in the *Prague Communiqué* (2001): while reflecting on the future Europe as being built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, education is considered necessary not only »to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies« but also »to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life«. Again, it is not so difficult to connect these phrases with the 'Lisbon vocabulary', born just one year before. However, this quote is taken from the same document which used the term *'social dimension'* in relation to higher education for the first time: in Prague, ministers »reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process«. At that time it was quite a vague expression but since 2001 it has become one of most quoted terms in Bologna discussions.

The *Berlin Communiqué* (2003) was already more concrete; it not only reaffirmed »the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process« but stressed »[t]he need to increase competitiveness« and to balance it »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 national and at European level«. There was also another important – and at that time hardly expected – message: »In that context, Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility. They emphasise that in international academic co-operation and exchanges, academic values should prevail«. Two years later, in the *Bergen Communiqué* (2005) the ministers went further; they recognised that »[t]he social dimension of the Bologna Process is a constituent part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. We therefore renew our commitment to making quality higher education equally accessible to all, and stress the need for appropriate conditions for students so that they can complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. The social dimension includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counselling services with a view to widening access«. From the point of view of this chapter it is also important that they added the following sentence: »We commit ourselves to upholding the principle of public responsibility for higher education in the context of complex modern societies«.

As a result of two years of work after Bergen before the next ministerial summit in London, a special report on these issues was produced (see *Key issues…*, May 2007) by *the Bologna Process Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries*. This was the first systemic effort within the Bologna Process to address the social dimension as such. As is visible from the name of the Working Group, the 'social dimension' (so far a broad, still not defined to the last detail term) was connected mainly to mobility issues. From the 'Bologna point of view' this has of course been the most important aspect, but some other aspects also entered the final report. A special part (Part II) was dedicated to the Social Dimension, also dealing with the concept (definition) as such. On the last pages of its work, the Working Group suggested the following overall objective to be agreed at the Ministerial Conference: »We strive for the societal goal that the student body entering, participating and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations. We therefore pledge to take action to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity« (*Key issues…*, 2007: 43). As they also pointed out, »the social dimension should be defined broadly rather than

specifically« (p. 11).[104] This broad approach was clear enough to keep all main tissues of the social dimension together: access to higher education, participation in higher education and leaving higher education (employment, citizenship). However, only now the extensiveness of this 'dimension' can be really seen: a demanding task, indeed.

The report on social dimension and mobility was presented at the London Ministerial Conference in May 2007. This issue also found a sound echo in the *London Communiqué*. First of all, there is a special paragraph on social dimension which is far more elaborated than was the case in previous *Communiqués* of the Bologna Process:

> »*Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. 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. We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity*« (*London Communiqué*, 2007, par. 2.18).

In addition, the *London Communiqué* chose the social dimension as one of the priorities for the working programme until 2009: the ministers obliged themselves to »report on our national strategies and policies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness« and to »invite all stakeholders to participate in, and support this work, at the national level« (par. 3.3). The so-called 'Bologna stocktaking' for 2009 will also include the social dimension (par. 3.7) and the ministers asked Eurostat »in conjunction with Eurostudent, to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries. Data in this field

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[104] »The rationale behind the social dimension of higher education is at least threefold:
Firstly, it is a question of *equal opportunity*. […]
Secondly, taking steps to meet the increasing demand for quality higher education creates opportunities to *reinforce the social, cultural and economic development of our societies*. […]
Thirdly, a strong social dimension *enhances the quality and attractiveness of European higher education*« (p. 12).

should cover participative equity in higher education as well as employability for graduates« (par. 3.4).

The social dimension is now firmly on the Bologna agenda as well as on higher education policy agendas of European countries. It is particularly interesting that further plans have been made not only with regard to data availability and national action plans with regard to mobility aspects (and/or with regard to »the social and economic situation of students in participating countries« as was stated in the *Bergen Communiqué*), but also with regard to *participative equity in higher education* and *employability for graduates*. The role of the 'Bologna stakeholders' has also been reconfirmed. In fact, the social dimension has been an issue pushed on to the Bologna agenda by a particular group of stakeholders – namely students ('ESIB', today's 'ESU') – and has from the beginning been at least 'a sensitive issue' for all other stakeholders.

Thus, a very ambitious agenda has been set. It will be extremely interesting to follow further discussions as well as to learn from the findings which will be reported in 2009. So far, it is only possible to ask some more questions. Can we expect these developments to bring essential and productive changes to European higher education? Should we probably expect a turn – e.g. when these statements will be challenged with their fulfilment – and a new period of 'transition'? A very different 'transition'? Could these developments end just like a 'Eutopia' – a non-realistic vision of European higher education systems beyond 2010? Could such a 'Eutopia' bring about some new incentives?

CHAPTER 7

Beyond the transition: *eutopia?*

In a display of his particular sense of humour, my Romanian friend Radu Damian likes to say that 'transition' has never come to an end in his life; it is just going on and on. However, the word as such suggests quite clearly that – one day – we should be 'over', that is, at 'another bank'. A transition is always a transition from X to Y. We cannot wake up every morning again into the same day (or maybe it is only possible in bizarre movies). As already indicated in the fourth chapter, while reconsidering (higher) education 'in transition', we not only mean 'countries in transition' in a narrow geographical sense and as it is used in diplomatic language but all European countries. In principle, it could be *any* country of today. While observing (higher) education as a vital subsystem of modern societies, it is not difficult to see that since the 1990s all these sub-systems have been involved in a thorough *transition* (yet, not all of them have been in the same *situation*) – from one point of view or another. Throughout this period, processes in education have been an excellent indicator of social, cultural and epistemic changes. Now, what is *beyond the transition*? It cannot be true that it would be just going on and on. Or perhaps Radu is not just joking after all and he is right?

Popular discourses of our times invest a lot in linking *knowledge* and *future*. Yet, this is not something totally unheard so far; these discourses have been constantly heard in one or another mode since the Enlightenment. Knowledge has become a tool of 'transition'. It raises hope for a 'better future'; this is a known pattern. What seems to be quite a new page in these discourses is that the link between knowledge and future is mediated by – '*Europe*' (whatever is understood by this name). Of course, this detail belongs to European discourses; it is not necessarily understood in the same way in other parts of the world. Centuries of conflicts and wars seem to have stopped with the idea of European 'coming together', progressing slowly but steady since 1945. Indeed, the 1990s brought

wars and disasters to some 'remote' parts of Europe again but, at the same time, this period broadened and deepened the faith in 'Europe', in particular in the East and South-east.

However, there has been a lot of discussion. For example, what kind of unification of Europe? Economic? Cultural? Political? All together? As regards higher education, it remained on the margins of the unification process for a long time but persistently within discussions of the emerging 'Europe of Knowledge' as Anne Corbett demonstrated in her excellent book on the last 50 years of European higher education history (Corbett, 2005). During the 'transition' from the 1980s to the 1990s, many new steps were taken within the 'small' EU of that time, inspired and/or simply pressed by the *spirit of the times*. European co-operation in higher education was growing fast: as in the 'old' Europe (e.g. Erasmus) as well as in the 'new' one (e.g. Tempus).

Thus, knowledge – and higher education as its specific generator – entered the centre of these discussions. At the end of the 1990s, on one hand we read »that Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge as well« (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998) while, on the other, that there is a 'need to establish a more complete and far-reaching Europe, in particular building upon and strengthening its intellectual, cultural, social and scientific and technological dimensions« (Bologna Declaration, 1999). In the 'transition' to the new millennium, an important political message was spread all over Europe that »a new strategic goal« is needed »in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy« and that »an overall strategy« aimed at »preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society« is to be prepared (Council…, 2000). Education and training found themselves in the centre of striving »for living and working in the knowledge society«. During this decade, many concerns have involved the »concrete future objectives of education systems« (Commission…, 2001). This trend has not only affected EU Member States; directly or indirectly, it has been much broader.

A focus on knowledge is clearly a focus on our future. It raises, however, a number of difficult questions that popular discourse is often not very aware of. *What knowledge?* European knowledge? Knowledge as an economic instrument? Indirectly contributing to social cohesion? Knowledge as a cultural driver? As a critical potential? As a goal in itself? And *what future?* A linear, i.e. a straightforward one – or an enigmatic future, dreams, *utopia*?

Sometimes, new words are born in our languages almost spontaneously which reflect chaotic and conflicting questions, answers and dilemmas of the present time. They could have a similar role in reconsidering the real world as dreams have in psychoanalysis. One of such new words is *eutopia:* a word with (at least) a double meaning. Two variants are in use today: *Eutopia* or *EUtopia*.[105] Both of them sound rather strange in our everyday languages but it is not difficult to see that either Europe or European Union is amalgamated with a famous word from the European past – *utopia*. Yet, there a third variant as well: *eutopia*. And this is not simple word play. The issue is crying out for an etymological introduction.

Europe and utopia

Europe *literally* began with the ancient Greeks. As we can learn from literature, in Greek mythology *Europa* was the name of the daughter of Agenor, the King of Tyre, seduced by Zeus in the shape of a bull. Geographically, Europe was at that time – in addition to Asia and Libya – only a not very clearly defined territory outside the Peloponnesus together with the islands, or outside what was considered their home country.

During a visit to Athens about a year or two ago, a provocative advertisement at the airport caught my eye. It said something like: »*the world has borrowed 50,000 words from us, but we kept one for ourselves – Mythos*«. Well, *Mythos* in this case meant a new age Greek beer. For a country that is so deep in the Mediterranean and which is, with respect to drinks, certainly better known for its wine, it is a surprisingly good beer. Amateur etymology can soon let us down, but sometimes it can offer us a paradox. One such paradox lies in the fact that the heritage of ancient traditions (can) appear as something which has no direct connection with these traditions. Or, in fact, no connection at all.

Irrespective of our attitude to traditions, we are in constant contact with them. In spite of frequently being sure that we are dealing with them objectively, seeing them 'such as they are', that is as an 'object' we have come across, we in fact need them mainly as a kind of 'building material' in which we articulate our time

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[105] Some simple 'googling' on the Internet can prove how much this word has spread around and in what variety of uses. A number of blogs have been created around Eutopia. Eutopia appears, e.g., as 'a platform for intellectuals and artists in diaspora' and as 'a dialog between North and South' (http://www.eutopia.nl/over.php#) while 'EUtopia is over' is reported at extremeskins.com. There is also a bookstore (http://www.eutopia.no/Bookstore.htm). As a key word it appears in many articles; see e.g. Boyfield and Ambler, *EUtopia. What EU would be best and how do we achieve it?* Adam Smith Institute, 2006; see http://www.adamsmith.org/images/uploads/publications/EUtopia_Final.pdf.

and our image, in short, we treat them purely subjectively. There are no special reasons not to think of this even when we hear the neologism '*Eutopia*'.

After all, even with the word *utopia*, which we can spot at the back of the newly coined word and which does not hide its origin in classical Greek, things were no different. Modern textbooks often explain the expression as 'dreaming about a better society'; sometimes even stating that Plato had 'come up with an ideal society'. But the notion itself was created and brought to life only in the early 16th century – two thousand years later – by Thomas More (who, by the way, was friendly with Erasmus of Rotterdam; he was proclaimed a saint by the Church and even Karl Marx had certain sympathies for him). *Utopia* very quickly entered the dictionaries of living languages and the expression has to this day become established in varying shades of meaning: from those linking it to *justice* or its *realisation* to those distancing themselves from this due to its *unfeasibility* or even *naivety*. Among these meanings, we can find interesting, mostly indirect connections with the notion of *learning* and *education*. In a certain way, the fundamental idea of European Enlightenment was also a kind of *utopia*.

The term *utopia* is described in modern encyclopaedias as a modern era neologism from the heritage of classical Greek (*ou* + *tópos*). Usually it is translated as a 'place which does not exist' or more poetically by some as a *Nowhere Land*. Even the first written *utopias* established a pattern which became a rule: representing an ideal fantasy country so as to place a critical mirror in front of the real life of society. The Enlightenment concept of progressing towards the better and the subsequent social movements drew strongly upon the same source: from the dichotomy of the fantastic and the real, whereby the fantastic usually 'defeats' reality; in utopia it becomes clear that the reality is not the 'real' reality. The German philosopher Ernst Bloch at the beginning and the end of his creative life, i.e. after the First World War (*Geist der Utopie*, 1918) and the Second World War (*Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 1954) created two most eminent philosophical monuments to the notion of *utopia*, whereby he linked it to human expectations, to optimistic hopes and to a desire for a *hitherto unrealised possibility*.

The modernist twentieth century dedicated a great deal of energy to the problem of the realisation of unrealised possibilities, contributing at the same time an original and huge problem that remains unresolved (we could say it has been pushed into the subconscious of the twenty-first century) – that realised utopias, some kind of *post-utopic realities* can, in fact, be even more horrible than the criticised 'un-real' reality. Although this in no way justifies the 'un-real' reality, it actually augments the old human problem of *unrealised possibilities*.

We would probably achieve a great degree of consensus if we put forward the thesis that these possibilities should be realised by humankind in the direction of the *good*, the *better*. However, what is the 'good', the 'better'?

Eutopia and *dystopia*

Let us return to amateur etymology. Irrespective of where, when and how the notion '*Eutopia*' was coined and with what purpose, it is possible to claim that such word play with the expression *utopia* is by no means unproductive. The ancient Greek '*eû*' is translated as 'correct' or 'good', in contrast to '*dys*' in the sense of a negative prefix 'un', or 'without' or even 'evil'. We have borrowed from classical Greek both euphoria and dysphoria, eustress and distress, euthanasia and dysbulia. So, why not borrow *eutopia* and *dystopia*, too?

This is a rhetorical question and perhaps the answer is rhetorical, too: we cannot borrow them (at least not from the ancient Greeks) because they were not theirs. They are our problem, not theirs. We can thus deal with it in the way that problems are usually dealt with: by at least trying to look for solutions. On the other hand, both terms have been in use for a long time; yet, not in everyday languages.

We have already said that the notion of *utopia* was used in dealing with the problem of the realisation of a (more) just society. Of a 'correct', 'good' society. It seems that the fantastic outlines of such a society are not possible without including an attitude to education, although only marginally. Plato in his *Republic*, if we include it in the tradition of utopian writing, emphasised the importance of a 'good' or 'correct' education; somewhere in the fourth book he says that the whole of our life follows the same path, indicated by education.[106] It is true that in the imagined 'ideal' state he offered a different education for every social class, 'suitable' to that social class, but has no reservations about women having to be given the same education as male guardians. In his *Utopia,* Thomas More said that its inhabitants – after only six hours of daily work! – dedicate most of their free time to education; a large proportion of adults are educated alongside young people, both men and women.[107] Education or the education system in

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[106] »"Then, if women are to have the same duties as men, they must have the same nurture and education?" – "Yes."« (Plato, 1993).

[107] »It is ordinary to have public lectures every morning before daybreak, at which none are obliged to appear but those who are marked out for literature; yet a great many, both men and women, of all ranks, go to hear lectures of one sort or other, according to their inclinations: but if others that are not made for contemplation, choose rather to employ themselves at that time in their trades, as many of them do, they are not hindered, but are rather commended, as men that take care to serve their country« (More, 2005).

utopias (the 'good' utopias, the *eutopias*) is thus truly closely linked to equality (in this case, between the sexes). However, it seems as if in the background there are already the first buds of the concept of the society of lifelong learning and the understanding of the social power of knowledge.

That knowledge – and the whole education system – is the 'right thing' and one of the key factors contributing to the appearance of a 'good' society became especially clear during the Enlightenment. Both the affirmative stress on 'good' knowledge and the negative connotation of the lack of knowledge, of ignorance as an 'evil' can, to a great extent, be attributed to that period. Notwithstanding all the historical shifts, our era still knows this dichotomy well, uses it and encourages it. If we paraphrase Kant,[108] the 'period of Enlightenment' aimed at the construction of an 'enlightened period': the future goal of the methods of constant creation and in particular dissemination – we could even refer to it as the democratisation – of knowledge was a 'better society'. The knowledge society? Are *we* living in an enlightened period?

It would no doubt be possible to identify many interests which would support a quick positive reply. But from the perspective of unbiased research (although this phrase belongs to the history of science), research for the sake of research itself, it is possible to formulate quite a number of reasons stopping us from simply giving a positive answer to this question. The exponential growth and accumulation of knowledge has started to produce paradoxes that our reflection on this matter must react to, as well as ethical dilemmas and social problems, as was the case with the long known accumulation of political power, financial wealth etc. No serious discussion of modern issues can any longer avoid unpleasant themes connected with the exponential process of the widening of knowledge. On one hand, there is the uncovering of very basic questions about nature, which has long stopped being intended for that which the ancient Greeks valued most, that is *theoretical knowledge*, 'knowledge for the sake of knowledge', with which 'wisdom' is reached, but for direct, unstoppable technical use and abuse of knowledge about nature and people in the modern economy, on the margins of which and beyond there are – and keep persevering – wide expanses of elementary hunger. On the other hand, the widening of knowledge also shows in the deepening of ethical and social doubts about genetic engineering, climate change, the use of food for the production of a so-called 'alternative' fuel, about the building of walls between the world of wealth and the world of hunger etc.

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108 » If it is now asked, "Do we presently live in an enlightened age?" the answer is, "No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment"« (Kant, 1974a).

Let us alongside these generally known and discussed issues add a small comment that will perhaps seem cynical to some, which is not connected with these great modern issues but with the routine of everyday life that slides past us, unnoticed in its immense importance: *general literacy*, this big idea of the Enlightenment period and the ambitious goal of nineteenth and twentieth century policies, now gives an equal opportunity to everybody to be able to follow, for example, *tabloid newspapers*. Education, its purposes, goals and, of course, results and knowledge as such at the beginning of the new millennium need to be seriously weighed up. The demand for such reflection in no way wishes to idolise the 'good old ways' in contrast to the supposedly 'empty' contemporary time. Education is not just that which has been and brought us to the 'realised utopia'. On behalf of the best traditions of what we call European culture and on behalf of influences of this or that sort all over the world, it is today necessary to pose a serious question about *knowledge being torn between eutopia and dystopia.*

The concept of utopia has in modern times also had its share of fundamental remakes. If its original value were, above all, in the painting of fantastic, seemingly completely harmless pictures of some remote, unknown places (most often isolated islands; only when mankind conquered and connected the whole planet, thus abolishing this possibility, space in utopias became replaced by time and places of various degrees of remoteness by a remote future), it very quickly developed the ability »to hit the bulls eye of the present«, as Jürgen Habermas once said when talking about the discourse of modernity (Habermas, 1985). The concept of utopia was in this sense undoubtedly a critical concept and we are still able to recognise it as such and even use it. But the *eutopic victory* of knowledge over ignorance contributed to the appearance of another concept.

The depiction of unknown places (nonexistent places), in which the actual image of the present time was reflected as in a distorted mirror so that the reader began to feel a pain in his head, has been replaced by the depiction of a more or less remote future, full of technical inventions that are well beyond the present control over nature and the objects surrounding us. In this the role of knowledge is reduced purely to *instrumentality* – and glorified. Picture books from the past, such as 'The Giant Man' (the title of a book from my first school library, translated from Russian) or about the 'Iron Fist' (the name of the main character in a futurist comic strip, translated from English, which we used to read surreptitiously under our school desks) are now talking about the 'war of the worlds': not as a visionary sight of a different, 'better' world than the one we are in, but as a kind of a perverse artificial production of a nightmare with the

kind of monsters that even Hieronymus Bosch could not improve on. Should this nightmare facilitate a 'free choice' of the all too needed experience of catharsis in relation to the unchangeable reality and present time? According to this concept, the future is no longer *different* from the present; the future becomes an *intensified present*. It becomes a pure *dystopia*.

The *eutopic* dimensions of knowledge

One of the big civilisational problems of the past lay in the fact that one of the dimensions of knowledge – *applicable knowledge* – remained marginal. Knowledge was traditionally a privilege in a similar way that educated circles are considered to form a social elite. The basic ideas at the foundations of the development of civilisations found neither encouraging circumstances nor effective ways to *eutopise*: to contribute towards 'the good' realisation of the possibilities dormant in theoretical ideas. On the other hand, one of the greatest civilisational problems of our time is the fact that knowledge is increasingly valued, created and usually also understood through only one of its dimensions: as *applicable knowledge.*

Knowledge seen in this way in present times is not a *privilege*, instead we could say it is a *social necessity* with which we have learnt to live and which we can master fairly well. The mastery of basic literacy has for a long time now no longer constituted a privileged class, elevated and separated from the wider classes, as was the case in the remote past. It is no longer primary school, but completed secondary school education that has become a general standard; in line with the Lisbon goals, by 2010 at least 85 percent of 22–year-olds in the European Union should have completed their secondary education (Commission…, 2006b: 17). The share of the population with a tertiary education among younger population segments is moving towards one-half. One of the central characteristics of educational policy in modern democratic societies is the widening of the access to (higher) education and the improvement of the population's education structure. Of course, because we live in – or are at least very close to – the knowledge society.

It is indisputable that people need (applicable) knowledge; knowledge that is useful to people in their everyday lives can, in principle, be in the interest of all. Knowledge that can be obtained and disseminated past all the traditional obstacles contributes towards the democracy of modern societies. In this regard, we nowadays often hear that knowledge contributes to both economic stability and social cohesion. However, an emphasis solely on applicable knowledge brings

with it problems which may in future years only get worse; they will certainly not disappear on their own accord.

Today, there is a consensus that people need applicable knowledge; we can also hear that schools should not teach anything that is not applicable, useful. If this conceals criticism of the long ago obsolete school methods, such standpoints must be accepted. However, they become problematic the moment they are interpreted to say that there can be nothing in the school curriculum which is not directly 'useable'.

When is knowledge 'useable'? At a glance, it seems that knowledge is initially useable 'to me': when *I* see in it *my* direct interest, for *my* direct benefit. In such a view, we can quickly see and prove the naivety and indefensibility of this in any discussion that is at all serious. If giving literacy skills to individuals in modern societies were only in their 'direct interest' we would probably still be very far from general literacy. But even at this point in the naïve argumentation we are getting accustomed to the fact that knowledge is (can be) *reduced* to *personal* interest. If we, because of personal whims (e.g. »I don't feel like going to school today«), translate this principle into the uncompromising language of the economy, the list of dimensions with which we can classify knowledge becomes 'useless', 'of no benefit' and therefore 'unnecessary'. Knowledge these days all too often finds itself in the position of being able to identify itself only with being or becoming *instrumental knowledge*. Who or what would benefit from a Copernican shift or the theory about the development of species or about the human subconscience? Not to mention Plato or More.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when European utilitarianism was still only just appearing, Henry Newman in his paper on the idea of a university strove for the »exercising of the intellect«: such exercise is in the interest of individuals themselves and best enables them to fulfil their obligations to society, went his argument (Newman, 1996). If we thus want to determine a truly 'practical' or 'useful' goal of education, then it is to qualify »good members of society«. It would be hard to say that this goal can be reduced to private interest. Of course, knowledge satisfies private interests (a doctor's to treat me; a teacher's to teach my children; an engineer's to set up a production line etc.), but at the same time it surpasses them in its complexity.

The complex goals of education cannot be reduced to private interest only or to instrumentality without endangering the very foundations of education. Education in its very nature is not just *functional strength*, but *the power of the analytical* (i.e. critical) *recognition* and *transcending* the reality. At this point it is connected

with utopianism, or with *eutopianism* as we described it above. This means we should also create from this point a vision of learning and (higher) education for the time beyond 2010.

We are thus challenged by the 'knowledge society' and by the 'knowledge-based economy'. With all the indisputable benefits it brings, it does not seem that the 'end of history' has come, namely that the last of the unrealised possibilities utopians have dreamt about has been realised. On the contrary, a number of serious problems are arising, of which we as a culture are not well enough aware. Knowledge is becoming a *commodity* to an extent that the twentieth century only dreamed of: it is sold as a commodity on a gigantic scale. We are not focusing here on the problems of the so-called proletarisation of intellectual professions or something like that (that is another story), but about the fascinating *disappearance of the aura*, to refer to a well-known essay (admittedly on art, not on education) by Walter Benjamin: knowledge in the »era of its technical reproduction«, that is at a time when we can keep and convey it in cosmic dimensions, irrespective of its extent or location of origin, loses its charm and becomes ordinary (Benjamin, 2005). When certain knowledge can be technically reproduced (this is today called *copy and paste* in all languages), when it becomes easily transferable and present everywhere (»we download it from the Internet«), we no longer need much knowledge – what a paradox! – to deal with it. Knowledge thus becomes a kind of a 'good time', *entertainment*. Such knowledge, of course, is no special privilege and elites, be they cultural or critical, are not based on it. But culture as we know to a large extent appeared among these elites.

So that in future we do not risk our roots, knowledge will have to strengthen the *common*, that *which we share*; in order to be able to make an active contribution to this, we must recognise and re-affirm *knowledge as a public good*, as well as the *public responsibility* for it. In order not to risk the welfare we have and in order to actually strengthen social cohesion, something which we so often refer to in our general goals, we must, in contrast to the reduction of knowledge to 'applicability', re-affirm all the dimensions of knowledge and the whole extent of educational goals: preparing young (and not so young) people for an active life as citizens in a democratic society, preparing individuals for their future professional careers, facilitating their personal development and, last but not least, creating and maintaining broad, superior foundations of knowledge and promoting research and innovation.

In 2000, *EUtopia* was formulated as »*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth*

with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion« (Council…, 2000). It is not merely a rhetoric question if we ask at the end: is *EUtopia/Eutopia* a sort of *eutopia* or a sort of *dystopia*?

It is a question Europeans have to ask – for the sake of European history (histories) as well as for the sake of our common future.

Abbreviations

BFUG – Bologna Follow-up Group
CEPES – UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education, Bucharest
CEEPUS – Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies
DS – Diploma Supplement
ECTS – European Credit Transfer System
EDC – Education for Democratic Citizenship
EHEA – European Higher Education Area
EI – Education International
ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ERA – European Research Area
ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe; *since 2007* **ESU** – European Students' Union
EUA – European University Association
EURASHE – European Association of Institutions of Higher Education
HEA – Higher Education Act
HEG – Higher Education Governance
HEI – Higher Education Institution(s)
ICT – Information and Communication Technology
LRP – Legislative Reform Programme
NQF – National Qualifications Framework
OMC – Open Method of Co-ordination
PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment
QA – Quality Assurance
TEMPUS – Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies
UNICE – Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe

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Tidskrift för lärarutbildning och forskning

»In 1989, I attended a conference on *perestroika* in Oxford which was an excellent opportunity to reflect on the spirit of time from an academic point of view and to exchange views with colleagues from all over Europe – still divided by the Wall – and noticed for the first time that this was not also a turbulent period in higher education only from a former socialist country's point of view. It was the first time that I came across the idea – still very unclear and very rough – that we were again approaching a period of tectonic *transition in higher education*, perhaps just the next step of the previous [1968] one.«