The Bologna Process and the Role of Higher Education: Discursive Construction of the European Higher Education Area

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1. Introduction

The changing boundaries of public and private spheres of higher education discussed in this volume (including the definition of higher education as simultaneously a public and private good),,are not just operating on the level of policy and practise, but also on the level of discourse. The perceptions of the social reality are constructed, negotiated, and fought over in policy texts, speeches, and memoranda. This article focuses on the analysis of the central documents of the Bologna Process. We argue that looking at Bologna Process discourse provides us with important insights not only about the Process but also the wider change in the legitimating discourse of universities and higher education as social institutions rather than just individual organisations. The Bologna Process is a rich topic for discourse analysis because it incorporates many slogan-like concepts, such as the Europe of Knowledge and the European Higher Education Area, painting the picture of the European higher education system in the future; albeit a future with a content that is still vague and open to various national interpretations. The aim of this paper is therefore to a) place the Bologna Process within the context of the globalisation and knowledge economy, b) argue that theoretical considerations drawn from critical discourse analysis may contribute to an understanding of the Bologna Process, and c) demonstrate through an example analysis how the abovementioned theoretical framework can be

used, arguing that the Bologna Process discourse reflects and contributes to the renegotiation of the tasks of universities and other higher education institutions in society and the redefinition of the public good elements of higher education. Special emphasis is placed on the linguistic and conceptual ways of constructing higher education as a social institution based on the notions of its relevance to the competitiveness of states as knowledge economies.

2. The Bologna Process and Globalisation

The Bologna Process is possibly the most discussed process in European higher education, influencing the structures of higher education throughout the whole of Europe. Despite its intergovernmental origins, the Bologna Process has also gradually integrated higher education institutions and students and their respective organisations, as well as the organisations of higher education employees, business, and industry into its structures. Even though the process first started outside the framework of the European Union, the European Commission has gradually gained an increasingly prominent position within the process; not least because of the integration of the Bologna Process in what is known as the Lisbon Agenda, which aims to transform the European Union into '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', as well as the recent EU enlargement. Universities and other higher education institutions, both as institutionally embedded organisations and on a wider scale as enduring social institutions with assigned tasks in the functioning of society, are at the core of the Bologna Process and its desired outcome: the European Higher Education Area. If the Bologna Process is the widest and most profound change in European higher education, we may justifiably ask whether the change is taking place only on the level of degree structures, quality assurance, and recognition mechanisms; or whether it also touches upon the conceptualisation of higher education as a social institution.

The Bologna Process operates in the niche created by and embedded in the complex web of distinct but related concepts and processes: Europeanisation, internationalisation, and globalisation. As these concepts have reached a somewhat stable definition in the European context of higher education research, it may be said with a certain degree of common understanding that as internationalisation, the Bologna Process is a form of inter-governmental cooperation taking place as a voluntary ac-

tion between nation-states; as Europeanisation, it emphasises the specifically 'European' character of higher education in European countries; and as related to globalisation it emphasises the competitive and market-oriented aspects of higher education (Teichler 2004; Enders 2004). For the purposes of this paper it is most useful to concentrate on globalisation as the wider societal change influencing the process and foundation of intellectual study and academic work, provision, and environment of higher education. The contentious concept of globalisation is used to refer to a process of dis-embedding previously national institutions such as higher education It is related to a restructuring of the tasks, functions, and authority of nation-states which share their power with various international institutions, thereby leading to a restructuring of international activities in territorially different frameworks and by direct networking of global actors (Held et al. 1999; Held and McGrew 2000). Globalisation changes their role in the provision and steering of higher education leading them to fulfil their role and use their steering capacity indirectly (e.g., via international organisations and regulations) and thus forcing them to play according to the general logics of globalisation. Although the wider historical, social, and economic European context cannot be underestimated, especially when defined in terms of ensuing competition between the nation-states and their institutions globalisation is undoubtedly one of the changes (possibly the most important one) behind the Bologna Process. Even other ailments for which the Bologna Process is seen as a remedy are often derived from globalisation discussion: the pressures of financial stringency of public higher education systems, prolonged duration of studies, difficulties of graduate mobility across European countries.

The social shift into what is commonly called knowledge-based societies emphasises knowledge and therefore education, research, and innovation as the building blocks of the national competitiveness. This has created tensions and competition among the largest economies in the world. The response of the European Union has been the introduction of the Lisbon objectives, aiming to make EU the most competitive knowledge economy in the world by 2010. This agenda places education on centre stage. In a more narrow perspective the Bologna Process and the resulting creation of the European Higher Education Area can be seen as attempts to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education in the eyes of both prospective and current students and academic staff, especially vis-à-vis the United States (Van der Wende 2001; Huisman and Van der Wende 2004). In a wider perspective, the Bologna Process, like the internationalisation of higher education in general, may be seen as "a systemic, sustained effort at making higher

education more responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economy and labour markets" (Kälvemark and Van der Wende 1997, p. 19). This view can be seen as a way of controlling globalisation, moving away from seeing it as something external to the states just taking place around the state actors, and towards a conceptualisation of it as a process constructed and contributed to by the state, albeit to a different degree by different states.

3. Changing legitimation of HE

Two elements should be taken into account when considering the Bologna Process from a theoretical perspective. The first addresses the change in the underlying legitimating idea or rationale of higher education which Gumport (2000) has identified as a shift from a social institution into an industry. The second perspective addresses the way in which the discourses may contribute to this shift.

The view of higher education as a social institution is inextricably linked to the national projects of the nation-states, devoted to national identity- and elite-building, sustaining cultural continuity, developing human capital, generating new knowledge and a skilled labour-force, as well as enhancing individual learning and fulfilment (Gumport 2000; Bowen 1980; Castells 1991). In its capacity of enhancing social and individual well-being, higher education has been considered a human right and a public good, thereby making it a public responsibility (Nyborg 2003).

As Enders (2004) pointed out however, the role of universities and higher education as social institutions has been complicated by the fragmentation of society:

> "…there seems no longer to be a single society to which a university can now be expected to respond. There are only governments, academics and students, labour markets and industries, professions and occupations, status groups and reference groups, communities and localities, and the dis-localities of the global." (p. 363)

This requires new modes of governance of higher education, many related to tighter connections with various local, national, and international level stakeholders (Enders 2004; Neave 2002). As a result of growing influence of international stakeholders such as intergovernmental organisations and international business on higher education, there is a growing convergence in higher education policy around the world, of-

ten carried by the global discourse disseminated by experts and organisations (Ball 1998; Rhoades and Sporn 2002; Dale 1999). Carter and O'Neill (1995, p. 9) argue that a new, nearly global orthodoxy of education policy can be identified based on the connection between competitiveness and trade and reducing government responsibility while increasing private contributions and involvement in education. Higher education policy discourse can said to be influenced by ideas and theories such as neo-liberalism, new institutional economics based on devolution of authority, incentives and self-management, 'performativity' (a steering mechanism based on target setting and accountability), public choice theory, and finally the new managerialism inserting the ideas and techniques of business management into higher education (Ball 1998). States have two ideal types of policy responses to the challenges of globalisation; creating market flexibility through reduction of social overheads and trade, privatisation, and competitive individualism; or striving to shape the direction of their national economy through investing in key economic sectors and the development of human capital (Brown and Lauder 1996). In this context the relevance of higher education for employment, trade, and competitiveness becomes a central issue. The Bologna Process fits the latter description to the degree that it is clearly an attempt to guide the direction of the European higher education to achieve desired outcomes; i.e., more competitiveness and attractiveness of Europe and its higher education. In his critical account of the European Higher Education and Research Areas, Kwiek (2004, p. 763) argued that the whole Bologna Process is based on the underlying assumptions of Europe and the world having entered a new era of knowledge-based and market-driven economies competing against one another, rendering 'production, transmission, dissemination and use of new knowledge' the conditions for the growth and survival of knowledge-based societies; thus underlining the aims, practises, and conceptualisations of the Bologna Process and the kind of higher education it aims to build. Similarly, although somewhat contentiously, Amaral and Magalhaes (2004) argue that the Bologna Process may be interpreted as another step in the neo-liberal movement to decrease the social responsibility of the state, in essence converting education into a private good.

The paradigm shift in higher education as well as other public services warrants change in the legitimating idea of higher education; from a social institution aimed at the related notion of education and knowledge as a public good, to an industry with the related notion of a private good and the notion of HEIs run like businesses. The new view of higher education is as part of the economy, industrial production units producing goods and services within competitive markets and for the benefit of

the organisations themselves as well as the nation states and taxpayers financing their operations. Universities are increasingly perceived, described, and discussed in terms of "a production metaphor" (Gumport 2000, p. 70) or by using market terminology (Fairclough 1995). Clark (1998) has researched the characteristics of "entrepreneurial universities", Slaughter and Leslie (1997) analysed "academic capitalism" and Shumar (1997) the "commodification of higher education". Such firmly established concepts as the 'learning society' or the 'knowledge-based economy' also "serve and symbolise the increasing colonisation of education policy by economic policy imperatives" (Ball 1998, p. 3). These examples may be taken as indications that even academia has begun to analyse itself through the prism of market terminology, reflecting a change in the discourse of higher education. Drawing on the ideas of Ball (1998) and Kwiek (2004) this paper argues that a similar strengthening of the economic notions of higher education linked to the questions of the relevance of higher education can also be found in the central documents of the Bologna Process. Adding to Ball and Kwiek's work, I show the way in which this understanding is linguistically construed in the documents

Every moment of language use is a social action shaped by and shaping wider social structures, practices, and institutions. Discourses, defined as particular ways of speaking which give meaning to experiences from a particular perspective, are central carriers or even definers of those socially constructed meanings. They may be collateral or competitive, and some discourses may gain hegemonic positions over other discourses, developing into commonly shared and taken for granted truths, which displace other alternative truths (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002; Jokinen et al. 1993).

Our ways of speaking about something do not neutrally reflect our world, identities, and social relations; but instead play an active role in creating, shaping, and changing them. Discourses do not merely reflect or mirror objects, events, and categories pre-existing in the social world; but rather actively construct those things, thereby having social and political implications (Potter and Wetherell 1987). This argument implies that the emergence of certain discourses as "institutional facts" or dominant conceptualisations of the world points towards a certain course of action as the only 'rational', 'logical', or 'legitimate' option. New features of social institutions need to be legitimised by appearing as parts of the natural order of things, based either on nature or reason. This also means that as certain institutional facts or conceptualisations of the world are legitimised, competing options are de-legitimised. The most successful institutional facts are not necessarily the most efficient ones

but those "that prove most successful at imposing a collective meaning and function on physical reality" (Adler 1997, p. 340). Fairclough (2001) argues that those in a position of power have the potential of imposing their meanings on the discourse. By adopting the imposed meanings as given, we acknowledge their authority and thereby reproduce and strengthen the discourse. Discourse is both consciously and unconsciously produced and helps to produce, reconstruct, or deconstruct power relations. This is not to say that those in the position of power would always be unanimous amongst themselves or be driving for a change. Similarly, the authority of different producers of discourse is not necessarily uncontested by others. Instead, there is a constant negotiation and power struggle taking place in the production of discourse. Therefore it is always worthwhile to ask whose interests the discourse serves.

From a discursive perspective, the Bologna Process is essentially a political communication and negotiation process, where texts are used to communicate the aims and procedures of the process leading to the establishment of the European Higher Education Area. From a discourse analytical perspective it may be argued that because the discursive conceptualisations are part of the 'rule-making' of any social institution, the discourse of the Bologna Process is as essential to the outcome of the process as the other types of social actions taking place during the process. We may therefore argue that the Bologna Process does not only change the organising of 'higher education' and 'university' through explicit changes to the degree structures, or the introduction of quality assurance and recognition mechanisms. Instead, the discourses of the Bologna Process also crystallise the renegotiation of the legitimate functions and roles of the higher education as a social institution. The Bologna Process documents create a conceptual understanding of universities and other higher education institutions as producers of knowledge and the skilled labour force needed by Europe to survive in global competition, breaking with the more traditional notions of higher education along the lines suggested by Gumport (2000) and Kwiek (2004). By promoting the creation of a shared identity for the participants of the Bologna Process as actors within the process, the Bologna Process discourse may significantly contribute to the consolidation of the more practical and organisational changes introduced in higher education systems and institutions.

However, a few considerations should be taken into account to enable a critical discussion on the research. Firstly, the trickling down of international discourse is not a clear-cut or unidirectional phenomenon and the authority of the ministers to produce the dominant discourse

does not always go uncontested. The interpretation of the Bologna discourse on the national higher education policy arena and agents is dependent on context; including the political and social situation of the given country, interests and aspirations of the actors etc, therefore leading to different understandings of what *the Europe of Knowledge* or *the European Higher Education Area* comprise and how they relate to the social role of higher education and its institutions. It is naive to assume that universities or governments would present homogenous interpretations on the Bologna Process and how it should be conducted. A flexibility of interpretations lends legitimacy to the process in the varying national contexts. Secondly, it is worth remembering that like texts, interpretations made of them and discourses as analytical categories projected onto texts are also contextual and discursive in, construing and constructing a certain kind of social reality. Therefore the researcher is also embedded in a certain set of knowledge and values and cannot completely separate that from the research. Critical discourse analysis as an approach discards the foundationalist assumption that everything can be referred to some unalterable, objective truth. It has been debated whether the traditional discussion around the quality of research related to objectivist research approaches, namely the criteria of reliability, validity and objectivity can be transferred to subjectivist paradigm at all, and if so, in what form (See e.g., Jorgensen and Phillips 2002; Antaki et al. 2003; Kvale 1995.) The first criterion in enabling a critical discussion on the research is clearly stating the set of presumptions guiding the analysis. This interpretation, drawing its inspiration from the ideas of Ball (1998), Kwiek (2004), and discussion on globalisation and knowledge economy presented above, is only one among many interpretations. As this paper illustrates the means through which the Bologna Process is being produced as a legitimate, rational, or indeed crucial process for the European higher education; in the following section I account for the persuasive linguistic features used to do this and how they are featured throughout the texts. Instead of analysing the text from every possible angle, based on the texts I identify three categories in which I pay specific attention to in the next section. The most illustrative examples of quotations are chosen, as it its likely that the reader of the communiqués would most likely be influenced by them in terms of making an interpretation of the social reality and what is 'meant' by the texts. The quotations which present a strong truth, such as 'taken-for-granted' expressed truths or causalities, are usually the most persuasive ones. In the quotations I try to show the features which contribute to the creating of the specific kind of 'reality' of the Bologna Process and the European higher education.

4. The discourse of the Bologna Process

The five key documents of the Bologna Process include the Sorbonne Declaration (SD) signed by the ministers of education of United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy at the 800th anniversary of the Sorbonne University in 1998; the actual Bologna Declaration (BD) signed in 1999 by the ministers of education of 29 European countries which gave the name for the whole process; and the communiqués of Prague (2001, PC), Berlin (2003, BC), and Bergen (2005, BGC) – ministerial follow-up meetings which have somewhat concretised the initially vague concept of the Bologna Process and the creation of the European Higher Education Area – the ultimate aim of the process. Although some may view these documents as meagre material for analysis, they encompass the five highest level official documents of the process: the ultimate framework for the proliferating interpretations of the Bologna Process discourse.

Certain common concepts can be found throughout the documents. The existence of certain concepts however, does not imply that their meanings remain constant. I wish to concentrate on certain concepts and elements found in the Bologna Process documents but which have been framed in different ways, giving them different connotations in the different documents. The elements I concentrate on are the conceptualisations constructed a) for the *Europe of Knowledge* as the concept used to argue for the worthiness of the process, b) for the *European Higher Education Area* as the aim of the process, and c) for the *role of higher education* in general and the *universities and other higher education institutions* more specifically. The first two concepts are explicitly mentioned in the texts; the third category, the role of higher education HEI's, arises from the more general research question of the paper and the contextualisation of the paper in the aforementioned theoretical and contextual considerations. Throughout the documents, a duality of meaning in the key concepts may be noted much on the lines of what is argued by Gumport (2000) and Kwiek (2004). This relates to the break between, and the related retranslation of, the more traditional, cultural, and public good notion of higher education on the one hand; and a contemporary, economy-oriented, and competitive private good notion of higher education on the other. I show this duality, together with the evolution of their relationship in the Bologna Process documents. I also analyse how the strength of these arguments is lexically and grammatically achieved.

It is useful to briefly identify the linguistic means through which the texts are constructed as cohesive, convincing, and persuasive entities. The means of persuasion and building the strength of the discourse are

the same throughout the documents and relate to all three concepts. In elaborating the persuasive means of the texts, I draw on the ideas of Fairclough (2001) as well as Jokinen (1999) who see argumentation and persuasion as a primarily social activity aimed at strengthening the position adopted by the writer/speaker, and weakening the opposing position.[1] Jokinen (1999, pp. 156-157) points out that it is a means of increasing our understanding about the many ways in which the use of language constructs our social reality; specifically, how facts are constructed; identities produced; and different categorisations created, strengthened, or questioned. It contributes to the understanding of how certain things, processes, and events are normalised and justified, or alternatively made to seem unnatural or undesirable.

The first means of persuasion to elaborate is constructing the agency (Fairclough 2001, pp. 100-102), "actorness", or the speaker's category by assigning a right for a certain kind of knowledge – and therefore power or duty to act (Jokinen 1999, p. 135). Though the documents imply several different agencies or even un-assignment of the agency, two constructions of agency or speaker categories are highlighted for the purposes of this analysis. The first agents are the ministers who have signed the declarations and communiqués. They are presented as the benevolent, yet somewhat distant supervisors of the process, or 'wise men', who *underline, acknowledge, agree, and reassert*, thereby guiding the process. The ministers are convincing agents due to their formal powerful position.

"*Ministers underline*[2] the importance of consolidating the progress made, and of improving understanding and acceptance of the new qualifications through reinforcing dialogue within institutions and between institutions and employers." (BC)

Secondly, the agency is assigned to a collective, inclusive 'we', which refers to all stakeholders of higher education in Europe, or even all citizens of European countries. This collective agency contributes to an understanding of the Bologna Process as something collectively embraced by a large number of countries, higher education actors, and general public with joint interests; encouraging everyone to embrace the presented conceptualisations and proposed activities, and obliging everyone

1 It may be noted however, that not all of this persuasion is deliberate, but along the lines of established conventions of writing official, international policy documents. They therefore also strengthen the conventions.

2 My emphasis.

to act accordingly, making the inclusive 'we' a convincing agency (Jokinen 1999, p. 139; Fairclough 2001, p. 106).

"*We owe* our students and our society at large a higher education system in which they are given the best opportunities to seek and find their own area of excellence." (SD)

Another means of persuasion is the utilisation of expressions with positive connotations (Fairclough 2001, p. 98; Jokinen 1999, p. 141) to lend legitimacy to the Bologna Process. It is not possible to give an exhaustive account of all such expressions, but in general it can be said that references to *progress, development, cooperation, future, taking steps forward, promoting,* and *enabling* something tend to have positive connotations. Positive verbs also tend to lend the positive connotation to the objective of the verb. Similarly references to *culture, citizenship, heritage,* and *democratic values* tend to have positive value. Sometimes positive connotations may be detected in the analysis only when replacing seemingly neutral expressions with their opposites, which may convey more distinctly negative connotations. The argumentation can also be strengthened by means of extreme expressions (Jokinen 1999, p. 150), for instance by claiming that something *must* be done or is *irreplaceable, indispensable, the best*, or *excellent*. The Prague Communiqué illustrates several of these persuasive tools.

"Ministers are affirmed that efforts to promote mobility must be continued to *enable* students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff to *benefit from* the *richness* of the European Higher Education Area including its *democratic values, diversity of cultures and languages and the diversity of the higher education systems*." (PC)

Other persuasive features include the listing of two or three features, which strengthen the argument by repetition and the appearance of including large segments of society or a large number of people as beneficiaries of the process. This can also convey a notion of multiple benefits or gains, or present the context of the Bologna Process as factual and generally known through declarative factual sentences and passive sentences (Jokinen 1999, p. 140, p. 152; Fairclough 2001, pp. 103-105). The next section elaborates the conceptualisations of the Europe of Knowledge, the European Higher Education Area, and the role of the universities and other higher education institutions.

4.1 The European Process and the Europe of Knowledge

The contextualisation of the Bologna Process in the first two documents – the Sorbonne Declaration and the Bologna Declaration – is anchored in the vague but imagination-provoking concept of a 'European Process' which has '*moved some extremely important steps ahead'* and '*become an increasingly concrete and relevant reality for the Union and its citizens'.* The European Process is not explicitly explained, but is implicitly defined in terms of the economic integration and development of the European Union and contrasted with the 'Europe of Knowledge' which is more explicitly defined as a cultural and intellectual project:

"The European Process has very recently moved some extremely important steps ahead. Relevant as they are, they should not make one forget that *Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of Knowledge as well*. We must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent." (SD)

"We are witnessing a growing awareness in large parts of the political and academic world and in public opinion of the 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." (BD)

The Europe of Knowledge is also presented as:

"*Widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor* for social and human growth and as an *indispensable component* to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the *necessary competencies* to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with *an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space.*" (BD)

This makes the Europe of Knowledge a very strong legitimating discourse for the Bologna Process, as social and human growth and European citizenship with its shared values are positively charged concepts and the passive form (*is widely recognised*) strengthens its presentation as a universal truth.

A few years later, an interesting shift is noticeable in the Prague Communiqué (PC) and the Berlin Communiqué (BC). In the Prague Communiqué the concepts "*the European Process*" and "*The Europe of Knowledge*" are not mentioned, but instead *"the future Europe"* and 'future' more generally are used to serve the same purpose as an argument for the Bologna Process. However, the nature of the argument has

clearly shifted from culture, shared values, and intellectual pursuits to more economic and innovation oriented contexts.

"In the future Europe, *built upon a knowledge-based society and economy*, life-long learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life." (PC)

"Ministers particularly stressed that the quality of higher education and research is and should be *an important determinant of Europe's international attractiveness and competitiveness*." (PC)

In the Berlin Communiqué the *Europe of Knowledge* makes a reappearance, consolidating the economic and competitive connotation introduced in the Prague Communiqué with the 'future'.

"Ministers agree that efforts shall be undertaken in order to secure closer links between the HE and research systems in their respective countries. The emerging European Higher Education Area will benefit from synergies with European Research Area, thus strengthening the basis of Europe of Knowledge. The aim is to preserve Europe's cultural richness and linguistic diversity, based on its heritage of diversified traditions, and to foster its potential of innovation and social and economic development through enhanced cooperation among European Higher Education Institutions." (BC)

It may also be noted that the Prague and Berlin Communiqués were written after the introduction of the Lisbon Agenda in March 2000 in which the reference to the knowledge based society and economy became prominent in the EU discourse. The concept of the Europe of Knowledge made its first appearance in a European Commission communication 'Towards a Europe of Knowledge' in November 1997. This aimed at building up an open and dynamic European education area by making 'knowledge-based policies' (innovation, research, education, training) one of the fundamental pillars of the EU's internal policies, and raising the level of knowledge and skills of all Europe's citizens to promote employment. This is an example of intertextuality as defined by Fairclough (2001, p. 129): a trickling down of the meanings from one set of texts to another in the production and renegotiation of the Bologna discourse. The reappearance of the Europe of Knowledge with the economic connotation in the Berlin Communiqué seems to refer either to the European Commission gaining more power within the Bologna Process, or the interest of the ministers in pleasing the commission.

Interestingly, the concepts of European Process or Europe of Knowledge do not appear in the Bergen Communiqué of 2005. Throughout the document, the European Higher Education Area is taken as the starting point which seems to legitimise itself without the need to refer to any external entities. Even Europe only warrants few mentions in the document.

4.2 The European Higher Education Area

The conceptualisation of the European Higher Education Area remains fairly constant in all the documents, even though the notion of the 'European Higher Education Area' and its acronym EHEA was only consolidated in the Prague Communiqué of 2001.

In the Sorbonne Declaration there seems to be two main ways of framing the European Higher Education Area, instrumental (i) and cultural (c) framing. The cultural framing is more literary in style and refers to Europe's cultural diversity, citizenship, and personal growth. In its stylistic elegance it is fairly vague and noncommittal, drawing from pleasant images rather than concrete benefits. It is also interesting to note that by presenting cultural diversity and different traditions in higher education in connection with citizenship and personal growth, they acquire a positive connotation and are presented as a positive, strengthening element instead of an inhibiting, confusing factor for a unified European higher education system- another possible interpretation.

"We call on other member States of the Union and other European countries to join us in this objective and on all European Universities to consolidate *Europe's standing in the world* through continuously *improved and updated education for its citizens.*" (c, SD)

"The anniversary of Paris offers us a *solemn opportunity to engage in the endeavour* to create a European area of higher education, where *national identities and common interests* can interact and strengthen each other *for the benefit of Europe, of its students and more generally of its citizens.*" (c, SD)

By contrast, the instrumental framing with its reference to notions of attractiveness and competitiveness and its down-to-earth style and concrete content, draws on rationality and practicality rather than eloquent imagery. In the Sorbonne Declaration, the instrumental framing appears less frequently than the cultural framing.

"The *international recognition and attractive potential* of our systems are directly linked to their *external and internal readabilities*." (i, SD)

"Much of the *originality and flexibility of the systems*…" (i, SD)

In the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué the cultural framing is markedly reduced and the instrumental framing is more pronounced than in the previous document. Especially in the Prague Communiqué the way in which the Bologna Process slowly begins to concretise is apparent, therefore making it less necessary to rely on elevated images. There is also a clear trend which indicates that increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education and higher education institutions becomes more pronounced in the Bologna discourse, whereas in the Sorbonne Declaration they are less pronounced.

"The *achievement of greater compatibility and comparability* of the systems of HE nevertheless requires continual momentum in order to be fully accomplished." (i, BD)

"We must in particular look at the objective of *increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of Higher Education*." (i, BD)

"We need to assure that the European higher education system acquires a *world-wide degree of attraction (i) equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions*." (c, BD).

"*Taking advantage of recognition tools so that citizens can effectively use their qualifications, competencies and skills* throughout European Higher education Area." (i, PC)

The Berlin Communiqué and especially the Bergen Communiqué further consolidate the practical nature of the European Higher Education Area by emphasising tangible structures such as the two-tier degree structure, the quality assurance system, and the recognition tools; as well as increasing the emphasis on attractiveness and competitiveness.

In terms of the development of the discourse, what is most interesting is the aforementioned connection between the European Higher Education Area, the European Research Area, and the Europe of Knowledge. It may be that research, even though often assumed to be an inseparable part of the concept of 'higher education', is not an obviously integral part of the European Higher Education Area but is rather something which must be explicitly mentioned as worthwhile. This speaks of

a certain separation of higher education and research, and the importance of other research organisations along the lines of Mode 2 knowledge production (see Gibbons et al. 1994). The need to reconnect those two is especially clear and pronounced in the Bergen communiqué, where it is stated as one of the four main priorities and strongly connected with the notions of quality and competitiveness.

"Ministers agree that efforts shall be undertaken in order to secure closer links between the HE and research systems in their respective countries. The emerging European Higher Education Area will benefit from synergies with European Research Area, *thus strengthening the basis of Europe of Knowledge*. The aim is to preserve Europe's cultural richness and linguistic diversity, based on its heritage of diversified traditions, and to *foster its potential of innovation and social and economic development* through enhanced cooperation among European Higher Education Institutions." (BC)

"*Conscious of the need to promote closer links between the EHEA and ERA* in a Europe of Knowledge, and of *the importance of research as an integral part of higher education* across Europe, Ministers consider it necessary…" (BC)

"*We underline the importance of higher education in further enhancing research and the importance of research in underpinning higher education for the economic and cultural development of our societies and for social cohesion*." (BGC)

"*We therefore emphasise the importance of research and research training in maintaining and improving the quality of and enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of the EHEA*. With a view to achieving better results we recognise the need to improve the synergy between the higher education sector and other research sectors throughout our respective countries and between the EHEA and the European Research Area." (BGC)

Instead of the cultural framings above, it can be debated whether another framing has emerged to replace it; namely that of social aspects and social equality, which seem to have emerged as a counterbalance to the emphasis on competitiveness and the instrumental framing. In the Berlin Communiqué it is rather vague in terms of the content and instead relies of elaborate images. In the Bergen Communiqué, however, it is mentioned as one of the priority areas, and is also more concrete in nature. Interestingly, it has also been directly linked with the notion of competitiveness and attractiveness: instead of a counterbalance, it has become a precondition.

"Ministers reaffirm *the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process*. The need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with *the objective of improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities* both at national and at European level. In that context, Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility." (BC)

"Ministers stress *the need for appropriate studying and living conditions* for the students, so that they can successfully complete their studies within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their social and economic background. They also stress the need for more comparable data on the social and economic situation of students." (BC)

"The 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*. 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." (BCG)

The Bergen Communiqué also otherwise seems to have taken a swing back towards the ideas of the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations. Firstly, the emphasis on cultural heritage as well as intercultural understanding and respect has reappeared. Secondly, the public good notions of education in society are stronger than earlier but also explicitly connected to the notions of attractiveness and competitiveness.

"We see the European Higher Education Area as a partner of higher education systems in other regions of the world, stimulating balanced student and staff exchange and cooperation between higher education institutions. We underline the importance of *intercultural understanding and respect*." (BGC)

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

"The European Higher Education Area must be open and should be attractive to other parts of the world. *Our contribution to achieving education for all should be based on the principle of sustainable development* and be in accordance with the ongoing international work on developing guidelines for qual-

ity provision of cross-border higher education. We reiterate that *in international academic cooperation, academic values should prevail*." (BGC)

4.3 The tasks and roles of universities and other higher education institutions

A similar dichotomy between the traditional, cultural aspect and the more instrumental aspect may be found in the conceptualisation of the task of the universities and/or other higher education institutions. The first two documents, especially the Sorbonne Declaration, feature the traditional, cultural influence of the universities. However, the documents also seem to contrast 'the glorious past' with a somewhat 'dire present' and aim for 'a bright future', indicating that the old means and tasks no longer serve their purpose. This is also evident in the way in which the ameliorative verbs *change, restructuring, moving ahead, enhancing,* and other such expressions are used throughout the documents to make a break with the past.

"We must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent. *These have to a large extent been shaped by its universities, which continue to play a pivotal role for their development*." (past, SD)

"Universities were born in Europe, some three-quarters of a millennium ago. Our four countries boast some of the oldest, who are celebrating important anniversaries around now, as the University of Paris is doing today. In those times, students and academics would freely circulate and rapidly disseminate knowledge throughout the continent. *Nowadays, too many of our students still graduate without having had the benefit of a study period outside of national boundaries.*" (present, SD)

"The Sorbonne declaration of 25th of May 1998, which was underpinned by these considerations, stressed the Universities' central role in developing European cultural dimensions. *It emphasised the creation of the European area of higher education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the Continent's overall development*." (future, BD)

The two later documents seem to feature more strongly what may be called a conditional role for universities: the existence of universities and/or other higher education institutions does not automatically guarantee the emergence of all good things in society, but is only conditional: if the universities/other higher education institutions act in a certain way i.e., implement the structural arrangements of the Bologna Process, then

good things will ensue. This may be because the context of the documents was the ministerial meetings rather than any national governmental or academic arena, but it may also be an indication of the nature of the Bologna Process as primarily a top-down international and national policy process as opposed to a bottom-up process initiated by the universities. However, it does seem to indicate a shift from the independent to the instrumental role of the universities.

"As the Bologna Declaration sets out, Ministers asserted that building the European Higher Education Area *is a condition for enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education institutions in Europe*." (PC)

"Ministers strongly encouraged universities and other higher education institutions *to take full advantage of existing national legislation and European tools* aimed at facilitating academic and professional recognition of course units, degrees and other awards, *so that citizens can effectively use their qualifications, competencies and skills throughout the European Higher Education Area*." (PC)

"*Aware of the contribution strong institutions can make to economic and societal development, Ministers accept that institutions need to be empowered* to take decisions on their internal organisation and administration." (BC)

"Ministers will make the necessary effort to make European Higher Education Institutions an even more attractive and efficient partner. Therefore *Ministers ask Higher Education Institutions to increase the role and relevance of research to technological, social and cultural evolution and to the needs of society*." (BC)

This trend continues in the Bergen Communiqué, where university autonomy is mentioned in connection with implementing the *agreed reforms*. The Bergen document also emphasises the commitment and support of various 'partners', broadening the scope of the stakeholders of higher education from students, governments, and universities to the employer and employee organisations, both on the level of discourse and in practise by accepting them as partners in the follow-up structures of the Bologna Process.

"As we move closer to 2010, we undertake to ensure that higher education institutions enjoy the *necessary autonomy to implement the agreed reforms*, and we recognise the need for sustainable funding of institutions." (BGC)

"We welcome *the support of organisations representing business and the social partners* and look forward to *intensified cooperation in reaching the goals* of the Bologna Process." (BGC)

Finally, it may be noted that there is a clear evolution from the Sorbonne Declaration to the Bergen Communiqué in using the term 'university'. In the first two documents, only the word university is used, in the Prague Communiqué the phrase "universities and other higher education institutions" is used consistently, whereas in the Berlin and Bergen Communiqués only "higher education institutions" is used. This may be for several reasons, for instance the non-university higher education sector is also integrated into the Bologna Process. The use of the word 'universities' seems logical in the Sorbonne Declaration as it was signed in the context of the 800th anniversary of the Sorbonne University. On the other hand, the shift of the concept may signal the erosion of the 'uniqueness' of the university by equating it unreservedly with non-university higher education sector organisations, and therefore also binding it by the rationales and operating logics as any other organisation, as argued also by Scott (2003). This is not to say that the development is necessarily a negative one.

5. Discussion

A certain fluctuation of the discourse of the Bologna Process seems apparent. Firstly, there has been a shift in the way in which the Europe of Knowledge as the background and legitimisation of the Bologna Process has been conceptualised, from cultural and intellectual to economic and innovation-oriented framing, and back to one connecting the two. Secondly, the actual intended outcome of the Bologna Process, the European Higher Education Area, seems to be framed somewhat differently with the shift from primarily cultural to primarily practical and competitive framing, with a social and equality-centred framing emerging gradually. Thirdly, the conceptualisation of the role of the universities and other higher education institutions seems to have shifted from more autonomous and automatically beneficial to something more instrumental and conditional. They are expected and encouraged to adopt and implement the proposed Bologna Process measures in order to contribute to the creation of the Europe of Knowledge.

As noted in the analysis however, the Bologna Process documents raise a lot of questions. Why does the 'Europe of Knowledge' have an economic framing in the later documents? Why have the notions of

competitiveness and attractiveness become more pronounced in the course of the process, and why has the social framing emerged as a counterbalance to the economic framing in the Bologna Process discourse? This may be because of the increasingly vivid globalisation discussion, which emphasises the challenges of globalisation for developed and developing countries alike and the ensuing need for competitiveness, as hailed especially by the corporate world, as well as the potentially negative effects of globalisation and the need to work against them, as promoted especially by the various civil society actors.

In this light it is especially interesting to consider what is left unsaid, namely the loud absence of the term 'globalisation' from the Bologna documents. Even though the Bologna Process is often presented as a response to globalisation in much of the contemporary research (e.g., Amaral and Magalhaes 2004) this argumentation is, most probably intentionally, due to the contentiousness of the concept and process of globalisation, not present in the actual Bologna documents but presented in a more subtle manner. The first two Bologna documents hint at the '*change'* faced by higher education and the '*challenges'* of the new millennium for which the Bologna Process implicitly seems to be offering solutions. It is left to the reader to connect these with globalisation, which undoubtedly has been done in most cases. The latter documents only refer to various '*needs'* for increasing competitiveness and attractiveness, but these seem to emerge from nowhere, as no cause for the need is given. This gives the documents an aura of technicality which connotes neutrality in values and masks the ideology behind the documents. Both choices: implicitly offering solutions to challenges, and the seemingly value-free technical notion of the process, increase the legitimacy of the Bologna Process and help avoid confrontations related to globalisation especially as an economic phenomenon. The presentation as purely technical in nature makes it easier to digest and accept for the heterogeneous audiences and stakeholders of the process, because it does not seem to invade the sovereignty of the nation-states or higher education institutions to ultimately define those institutions, or force the actors to take a stand regarding the positive and negative connotations of globalisation.

This is also reminiscent of the way in which discourse should always be considered in relation to the producers and audiences of the discourse. The text of the Bologna Process documents was written by a preparatory team instead of the ministers themselves and is a result of successive rounds of formulations and reformulations, discussions and negotiations dependent on the power positions and emerging coalitions between the different actors of the process: the different national minis-

tries, the European Commission, the stakeholders, and other related associations such as the Council of Europe, EUA – The European University Association and ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe. Similarly, it may be that part of the increase in the practical, technical veneer of the later Bologna documents may be attributed to being aimed at convincing different audiences. The first documents may be aimed more at convincing the ministers themselves of the viability of the process, whereas after the process achieved political legitimacy, the latter documents are aimed more at a wider audience of higher education institutions and administrators on whose life the process has substantial bearing.[3]

It is clear that the Bologna Process is not discursively 'complete' or 'hegemonic' yet, but instead continues to be subject to discursive power struggles. The discourse is not consistent but instead both the 'old' and 'new' elements continue to exist in parallel, and the meanings of different concepts have been retranslated on the way. We must also not fall victim to the general change discourse around higher education policy and research, which tends to depict the current trends in higher education as representing the biggest change of all times in higher education, therefore making us predisposed to seeing change even when there is none. The balance between real change faced by higher education in the past, and perceived and depicted change and the specific teleology's created by it should not be forgotten either.

Despite these reservations, I argue that the observations presented in this analysis are consistent with Kwiek (2004) who has noted that the vocabularies of the European Higher education Area and the European Research Area are converged and linked to a wider renegotiation of what higher education, teaching and research, functions and financing, and the roles of students and staff are supposed to be about. On the other hand, it may equally well be argued that the discursive change within the Bologna Process documents within the time span of barely seven years is insignificant, and that it would be more significant to discuss the conceptualisations of the social roles of higher education and HEI's in a wider time span. The elements discussed in the context of globalisation, such as the restructuring of the relationship between nation-states and higher education institutions, increased competitiveness between knowledge-based economies, and the aim of states to control and respond to globalisation through investing in higher education and emphasising its responsiveness to perceived change for instance, are certainly elements echoed in the Bologna discourse. Although it may be noted the discur-

3 I am indebted to Don Westerheijden for this idea.

sive shift towards the private good nature of higher education is not clear in the Bologna documents and the later documents of the Bologna Process pay sufficient attention to the public benefits accruing from higher education, we may question the precise conceptualisation of those public benefits. The public good nature of higher education seems to take a new shape: the public benefits do not operate on an abstract level of general good but are specifically related to the aspirations of the states to become knowledge societies and economies. Higher education has to be relevant, and relevance is increasingly defined in terms of the employability of graduates and direct contributions by the higher education institutions to the economic competitiveness of states and regions.

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