this to themselves. As the target date for the completion of the Bologna Process nears, there are questions not only about what happens beyond Bologna within Europe, but also beyond Europe, as other continents become infected with new systems of harmonisation and control as they prepare to compete with the Bologna brand.

Note
1. The special issue originates from a conference organised by Tor Halvorsen 'The Bologna Process and the Shaping of the Future Knowledge Societies', the third conference on Knowledge and Politics, University of Bergen, 18–20 May 2005 (Halvorsen and Nyhagen 2005). The authors have written new or substantially revised articles for this special issue.

References

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Interview

The Bologna Process: a voluntary method of coordination and marketisation?

Ole Henckel interviewed by Susan Wright on 28 January 2008

Abstract
Ole Henckel is writing his PhD thesis on the relationship between national and European higher education policy as well as the history of the Bologna process. The aim of this interview was to learn about the historical background to the Bologna process, which interests were involved and which were excluded, what their motivations were, why they thought it was a good idea, and what they were trying to achieve? As the interview progressed, it focused on three themes. First, at what points did it become clear to participants that they were engaged in a new European 'great game' of creating not just a standardised Higher Education Area, but a global market? Second, how does the Bologna process work as an exemplar of the European Union's new form of governance through freedom, often referred to as the operation of 'soft power' or the Open Method of Coordination? Third, what are the most recent developments, and what kind of future is emerging?

Keywords
Bologna process, European Higher Education Area, policy history, open method of coordination, marketisation

An emerging European game – of what?
SW: Please would you start off by explaining a little of the background to the Bologna process and associated European initiatives? How and why did the Bologna process come about? And what is it about?

OH: The starting point was the French minister deciding to host a conference when Sorbonne University had its 800th anniversary in 1998. Along with his colleagues from Britain, Italy and Germany, he presented
the Sorbonne Declaration on the harmonisation of the higher education systems in Europe. In that Declaration they articulated a strategy for a European higher education system based around a two-cycle structure. It wasn’t made explicit that it had to be a 3-year bachelor and a 2-year master degree - it just spoke about a two-cycle structure. No one had heard about this initiative before it was presented at the conference in the Sorbonne and this approach created some hostility because it breached the traditional working method among the member states in the European Union – that everybody could have their say on any initiative.

**SW:** Not three or four countries just doing their own thing?

**OH:** One thing was three or four countries taking an initiative without informing the others. Another thing was that these were the four biggest countries in the European Union. The smaller countries felt they had no say at all. So it created a lot of hostility, not least because they used the term ‘harmonisation’.

**SW:** And why was that term used? Was it to do with the idea of creating a European market for higher education at that stage?

**OH:** The declaration from Sorbonne clearly indicates some kind of marketisation, by saying that European higher education needs to become more attractive to students outside of Europe. The French political scientist Pauline Ravinet (2005) has analysed the preparations for the initiative and confirms that global attractiveness was a priority. But it wasn’t because the administrators involved were taking a pre-prepared and clear strategy out of their bottom drawer. It was mainly the idea of the French minister to hold this conference and the administrators had, within a very short amount of time, to prepare something that he and his nearest colleagues could agree upon. Interviewing a lot of the French bureaucrats involved in the preparation, Ravinet also shows that the British minister, Tessa Blackstone, was reluctant to use the term harmonisation because of Britain’s historical relation with the European Union. That created some tension but they still ended up using ‘harmonisation’ due to the speed with which they had to do the negotiations.

**SW:** What happened next?

**OH:** After the Sorbonne Declaration had been presented, it more or less lay dormant for six months because of this opposition from the member states and because no one really knew who was to take charge of the process. It wasn’t stated in the declaration. Then Austria had the presidency of the European Union so, along with the European Commission, they took the initiative to invite the member states and the ten countries preparing for membership of the EU for an informal discussion of the Declaration. That gradually took place over a period of six months and during this period they decided to accept the Italian minister’s invitation to hold a follow-up conference in Bologna the year after.

**SW:** So where are we now?

**OH:** The European Commission and the Austrian presidency prepared for the holding of the Bologna meeting in June 1999. What is interesting is that already when the informal working group was established to prepare for the conference, the European Commission was involved. The Commission also managed to involve the two European university establishments, the Association of European Universities and the Confederation of Rectors’ Conferences. They become somehow involved on the side, through the European Commission inviting them to engage in the preparation of the official background report, which afterwards became known as the Trends 1 report (Haug et al. 1999). This is a comparative survey of the existing European higher education systems and, on the basis of this description, the two university associations also made some recommendations about how to move forward in the process. You can clearly see these recommendations feeding into the articulation of the Bologna declaration.

**SW:** So, are you saying that the Rector’s conference and the Association of European Universities were really setting the agenda?

**OH:** They were involved in setting the agenda. The Italians had responsibility for articulating the Bologna Declaration but these two university organisations definitely had some influence on the agenda setting. It was not the case, as is often presented, that the European
Commission and the two university associations only arrived on the scene later in the process: they were, as Hackl (2001) has shown, involved from very, very early on.

**SW:** And were there any other stakeholders involved? What about the students?

**OH:** Not at this time. The students' organisation, the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), came to the Bologna meeting but only became aware of what was involved during the meeting itself. Most people weren't really aware of the French minister's first initiative because it only involved four countries. Even though the Sorbonne Declaration had raised some hostility, this was mainly in the national bureaucratic fields and among national rectors' conferences. Otherwise there was very little attention towards what was going on, also because, at the time, no one really could predict what kind of momentum this would gain later on.

**SW:** And how did it gain momentum?

**OH:** The Bologna declaration had the main goals of increasing the competitiveness of the European system of higher education emphasizing mobility and employability. To reach these goals the declaration identified six action lines or objectives around which national reform initiatives should be coordinated:

- a system of easily understandable and comparable degrees, including the implementation of the Diploma Supplement (developed as part of the Lisbon Recognition Convention agreed upon in 1997)
- a system essentially based on two main cycles:
  - a first cycle (Bachelor) relevant to the (European) labour market;
  - a second cycle (Master) requiring the completion of the first cycle
- a system of accumulation and transfer of credits (ECTS)
- mobility of students, teachers, researchers etc.
- co-operation on quality assurance
- a European dimension in higher education.

The countries signing up to the Bologna declaration also agreed to meet two years later so there was a clear indication that this was not just a one off event. These regular ministerial meetings aimed to avoid the lack of momentum, uncertainty and confusion which followed the Sorbonne event. In addition, they established an informal Bologna follow-up group (BFUG) as the first attempt to institutionalize a European-level policy structure in the domain of higher education. This set up a momentum because in those two years a lot of preparatory work was done towards the next ministerial meeting in Prague.

**SW:** That's 2001?

**OH:** Yes. In the period towards the Prague meeting, national authorities were working on what the Bologna Declaration would actually mean for their national legislative frameworks, were they going to implement it, and, if so, how? The degree structure was especially at the top of the agenda during that period. The two university organisations also continued their involvement. They saw there was clearly a possibility for something to happen here and also for them to influence the process. They were not officially part of the BFUG until after the meeting in Prague, where they, along with the European student organisation (ESIB), became consultative members of the Bologna process. But, on the side, the university associations were commissioned by the European Commission to yet again prepare an important background report. Just prior to the Prague meeting, they held a convention in Salamanca where they decided to engage in a merger with the objective of ensuring their influence on the articulation of the Bologna process. The papers from that convention clearly stated that European universities were now finding themselves in a context of increased co-operation and competition for higher education. University managements recognised that they were working in an environment of marketisation in higher education and in order to get some influence over how this developed and to position themselves in any emerging global market in higher education, they decided upon this merger.

**SW:** That's when the European University Association was established?

**OH:** Yes, the Salamanca convention confirmed the establishment of the European University Association - the decision was made at
previous meetings between the two university establishments and the convention was just a confirmation. But they accepted the challenge of operating in a competitive environment – at home, in Europe and in the world, as they put it.

SW: What kind of people were involved in the European University Association? Were they the universities’ leaders and managers or was it like an academic union? Which voices from the university were heard through that organisation?

OH: It was university management. Faculty was not represented at all. Faculty was represented in a different organisation called Education International (EI) which does not just represent university faculty but people employed in education from kindergarten to higher education. Additionally, EI has a global reach. It’s not specific to Europe.

SW: So the university leaders got their act together to be influential in the formation of the Bologna process but the faculty unions were part of this larger global and comprehensive organisation?

OH: Actually, at this stage of the process, Education International was not actually involved at all.

SW: Faculty unions are not even round the table?

OH: You could say they were not invited to the table – or they were not pressuring to get a seat at the table until 2003/2005. In the early agenda-setting stages they were not at all present. At this time they were more oriented towards what was taking place in the WTO – the global negotiations and the political discussions on a transnational regulatory regime on higher education. They were strongly opposed to the marketisation of higher education, which they saw might come out of the WTO regime. During this period they were not at all orientated towards what was taking place in Europe – maybe because they did not really believe it was something that would gain ground, or it might be because in comparison to the university managements they were not very well organised.

SW: Was it also because it was not absolutely obvious that the Bologna process at this stage is about marketisation?

OH: I would say that the statements of the university leaders at the Salamanca convention indicated very clearly that this had a marketisation element. It is not only marketisation: it was an issue of both co-operation and competition. The co-operative aspect was shown when the universities engaged in consortia or groupings of similar European universities to position themselves. They were co-operating but they were doing so to increase or intensify their own position towards other competitors, so both elements were in play. Also, at the ministerial meeting in Prague, the students were present. The organisation of students’ unions across Europe (ESIB) had prepared their position at a convention in Göteborg where they stated that higher education should continue to be a public responsibility.

The students managed to get this on to the agenda as part of the ‘social dimension’. The European Universities Association also backed this position. There was an alliance between the students and the university leaders. Whereas in a national context it was usually the faculty and students who have strong links in common, this was not at all present at the European level. At the Salamanca convention, the meeting just prior to Prague, hosted by the two European university organisations, both the students and Education International were present, but the faculty organisation really had no influence. The students were articulating a clear interest along the same lines as the European University Association and this fed into the Bologna process in terms of maintaining education as a public responsibility.

SW: And what does that mean?

OH: That’s a good question because it never becomes clear whether it means that national governments have the responsibility to ensure a supply of higher education, or if it also involves governments’ funding higher education. Public responsibility is only highlighted with reference to regulations, where there is consensus between those countries that have free education and those that have introduced tuition fee as part of their funding regime.

SW: So that students should not have to pay fees?

OH: The Bologna process never addresses the question of funding in higher education. As it progresses at the intergovernmental conferences, it addressed more or less all aspects of higher education
except funding. In the background report for the ministerial meeting in Bologna, it was mentioned that the varieties in funding systems might have consequences for the development of the proposed European Higher Education Area as it might be more attractive to some students to go to countries with no tuition fees than to countries with high fees. However, the ministers decided not to address the issue. Then in Prague it was emphasized as a public responsibility without further clarification on the substance. Funding was an area of huge disagreement between the countries involved and as a consequence, it is maintained as the responsibility of individual member states. Funding is the area on which it has been most difficult to achieve consensus so it is kept outside of the process all along.

SW: And when you think of universities as a public good, is there also a social agenda for equality or equity - does that angle get articulated?

OH: As an outcome of the students’ declaration from Göteborg, the statement that universities are a public good is included in the ‘social dimension’ of the Bologna process, but not as strongly as it had previously been articulated among the stakeholders in higher education. This is where you can see the division at the Salamanca convention between university leaders and students on the one hand and faculty on the other. Education International was present but they were the only ones to maintain the position of the Magna Charta Universitatum agreed by European Rectors back in 1988. In response to the Single European Act (1986) which defined the EU as an area without internal frontiers regarding the free movement of goods, persons, services, and capital, and as a response to the Erasmus programme’s encouragement of student mobility, the Magna Charta stated that universities have to be maintained as autonomous and independent institutions, free of political influence, in accordance with the Humboldonian tradition. This position was re-articulated at the Salamanca convention in 2001 by Education International. This was one of the reasons why Education International became marginalised - officially they were excluded from the Bologna process until the ministerial meeting in Bergen 2005, when they were given a consultative status, but at that time the agenda setting had more or less been completed. University leaders had moved away from the position stated a decade earlier in the Magna Charta - that is, the idea of totally independent universities free of the accountability regimes that were gradually being established as part of the new public management wave during this period. University management was leaving that strategy behind and accepting that governments and taxpayers had some rights to ensure that they were getting value for their money. In this regard they were moving step by step away from a confrontational position towards national governments and were becoming more players of the game - and maybe even seeing this as an opportunity to become the players of the game.

SW: But was it clear to these players yet, what the game was?

OH: Not really. But it does become clearer at the Prague ministerial meeting where you could say that the Bologna process is becoming more concrete. A few action lines are added regarding lifelong learning, the official involvement of students and university management as well as an emphasis on the global pull effect of European higher education. It is also in Prague that the institutionalised policy structure of the process takes shape. The Bologna Follow-Up Group was formalised with all the member states of the European Union and added signatories of the declaration involved. Additionally, the European Commission was given official status as part of the process with a seat at the top of the table - steering the process along with the EU Presidency at the time. The European University Association and the student organisation were also included as consultative members, along with European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), which is parallel to the European University Association, but on behalf of leaders of university colleges.

SW: Also UNESCO?

OH: They became involved in 2003, at the ministerial meeting in Berlin, along with the Council of Europe, yet there was still no sign of faculty involvement through EU.

SW: So this Bologna Follow-Up Group was really pushing the process along?
OH: In addition to the BFUG or as part of the BFUG structure a preparatory group was established composed of representatives from the countries hosting the previous ministerial meeting and the next ministerial meeting along with two EU member states and two non-EU member states. They were responsible for preparing the next ministerial meeting in Berlin in 2003. In cooperation with the European Commission they were also in charge of realising an official work programme – official Bologna seminars, workshops, conferences etc. on specific topics – in between the ministerial conferences, involving stakeholders of various kinds – university leaders, students, and quality assurance agencies. The European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA) became involved after Berlin when ministers called upon ENQA to develop guidelines on quality assurance in dialogue with the EUA, ESIB and EURASHE. ENQA is an 'independent' network of quality assurance agencies in the member states, funded by the European Commission from the late 1990s.

SW: Was ENQA also getting their act together so as to be players in this process, like the university leaders had done earlier?

OH: Yes exactly. ENQA was not in this process from the beginning. At the time ENQA was established on the initiative of the European Commission, it was more like trying to get a hold on the whole area of quality assurance in Europe so as to avoid too many bogus actions in this area. They were trying to articulate some common criteria for quality assurance. Later, between 2003 and 2005 there was a struggle within the ENQA network over what strategy to follow – whether it should be quality assurance through evaluation or through accreditation. Christian Thune, who was head of the Danish Quality Assurance Agency, was in charge of ENQA during these years and he tried to maintain the evaluation strategy whereas southern and mid-European countries favoured accreditation, which in the end was to become the chosen strategy. It is more suitable to the dissemination of accountability regimes.

SW: And is now even implemented in Denmark.

So, just to recap on the formation of the Bologna process, from 2001 onwards, there was an institutionalised structure led by the European Union and involving university leaders and students. This Bologna Follow-Up Group was setting the agenda. It was organising seminars focusing on, for example, quality assurance, the implementation of the degree structure, and the European grade transfer system. Conclusions and recommendations from these seminars fed into the reports which the Bologna Follow-Up Group presented to the ministerial meetings, which were held every two years.

OH: In addition, the European University Association was commissioned to produce the Trends Report series for each ministerial meeting. From the beginning, these fed very much into the agenda. Later it became one report among others. Bologna with Student Eyes was produced by ESIB. The Bologna Follow-Up Group commissioned experts to produce reports on specific aspects. This started at the Berlin ministerial meeting and for the latest meeting in London in 2007: the Bologna Follow-Up Group commissioned an expert report on the external dimension of the Bologna process. This means the process has now reached a stage where it is no longer an intra-European agenda, but is now concerned with how to present this European Higher Education Area to the outside world, how to co-operate with universities in 'third countries', that is, countries outside the process, and how to attract and recruit students and academics to a Europe which is struggling demographically.

Open Method of Coordination

SW: Alongside the development of this process was the beginning of discussions in Europe about the open method of co-ordination. The European Commission had certain areas where they had the right to make declarations but other areas where their remit wasn't so clear. They were trying to harmonise activities across Europe in those areas by what became called the 'open method of co-ordination' or OMC. The Bologna process is sometimes quoted as the best example of OMC. Do you agree with that? At what point did OMC come on the scene? Is the Bologna process older than OMC and how do the two relate to each other?
OH: In the literature, OMC is often presented as a new form of governance that was introduced in the late 1990s, just before the Bologna process started — a kind of third way governmentality, disseminating varieties of neo-liberal policy regimes. But the usual argument is that the OMC's origin lies in labour market policy. In 1997, the European Council met in Luxembourg and initiated 'the Luxembourg process'. This is a labour market policy organised around OMC principles: that is, working groups of national (rather than EU) civil servants and experts articulate common objectives and develop indicators, benchmarks and best practice, which countries are invited to adopt, but which are also used as a kind of peer pressure on the countries that don't move as fast in that direction.

SW: So it's supposedly voluntary?

OH: From a judicial point of view, you could say that it is voluntary. However, with the way it works, it can be seriously questioned how voluntary it actually is. The Bologna process is also characterised by these OMC structures, but if a country decides not to follow the Bologna philosophy and principles, their higher education system would be completely out of step with the rest of Europe. That of course would create a lot of problems for student mobility to other European countries, and it would create problems with the recognition of degrees when students try to enter the labour market in those countries. Even though it is not officially harmonisation, but convergence, I would argue that it is very difficult for any country to remain outside of these OMC structures. The important thing is not so much how identical the higher education systems are. The important aspect is that alternative development becomes more difficult. National reforms must take matters of convergence into consideration. Divergent reforms are no longer an option.

SW: So it's not the EU telling us all what to do but it's creating the conditions for every country to join in. It's open to everybody and it's just a method of co-ordination, not, supposedly, a method of top-down government.

OH: You could say, some draconian structures are created, but, in peculiar ways, countries decide for themselves to fall in line with the policy goals created through these structures. In that regard it becomes very efficient exactly because it is open. It gains a lot of legitimacy because it involves as broad a range of stakeholders as possible on super-national, national, and institutional levels. Across these levels participants are involved in debates, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation which means everybody has the feeling that they are having their say.

SW: Everyone who's already round the table.

OH: Yes, but also those who are not formally included around the table when political decisions are made. In the case of the Bologna process, institutional representatives participate in Bologna seminars between the ministerial meetings. But when you go through the conclusions and recommendations reached by these various seminars, it becomes clear that they are never in contradiction with the Bologna process and the Bologna philosophy. In some cases a seminar might try and bring along a completely new issue to the agenda but this usually comes from those who also sit at the table and are involved when decisions are taken.

SW: So you're saying the seminars are very open but somehow magically they end up confirming the existing agenda.

OH: Yes. But this way of organising the process creates a lot of legitimacy.

SW: In a sense it co-opts people into it?

OH: Yes co-option is a very good word to describe what happens to those involved in this process. I have done interviews with people involved in the process and all of them articulate that becoming an agent of the developments is very easy, whereas it is much more difficult to maintain a position that is regarded as an alternative to the mainstream consensus-based reform processes. If you try to articulate an alternative position, you simply run the risk of playing yourself off the field.

SW: This game they are playing is, then, a new form of governance in Europe, the Open Method of Coordination, which is a way of getting people voluntarily to co-opt themselves into a system that offers very few alternative ways of playing — you either join in the
game or you play yourself off the field, as you said. How does this OMC get established in the European Union’s various coordination processes?

OH: It became officially established at the Prague meeting (May 2001) in the case of the Bologna process. There are also huge overlaps with the Lisbon process and the vision of the Europe of Knowledge. It’s a macroeconomic strategy and that is where education became fully adopted into European Union policy. The Lisbon process runs parallel to the Bologna process. The focus on education within the Lisbon process is mainly on vocational education and training but at the European Council’s spring meeting in Stockholm in 2001 it was decided to establish a detailed work programme that also includes higher education. That’s when you have a stronger vocationalisation of higher education. At the spring meeting a year later in Barcelona in 2002 the conclusions clearly state, with explicit reference to the Bologna process, that one of the strategies of the Lisbon process is to ensure that European higher education sets the world-wide standard for quality in higher education by 2010. This is part of establishing the European Higher Education Area on the global market for higher education.

But regarding the OMC, while it is usually said that its origins lie in labour market policy – and that’s fair enough because that is clearly where there is the earliest development of indicators and benchmarks and the use of peer pressure – the way that higher education co-operation had developed in the early 1990s was also a kind of OMC. This is argued by Anne Corbett (2005) among others. Following the initiation of the Erasmus programme of intra-European mobility in 1988, co-operation structures were created between universities in the mid 1990s. In 1995 the Erasmus programme became part of a larger European initiative, the Socrates programme, which included the development of thematic networks between universities. The ways in which different actors worked together across universities and also in relation to the European Commission gradually acquired some of the characteristics which later became articulated as OMC structures. These existing structures are one of the explanations as to why university leaders managed so eagerly to get a foothold in the Bologna process when it started to take off and it also helps to explain how the Bologna process came to gain so much momentum so very fast.

SW: Can you explain that in a little more detail? The Erasmus initiative started as something completely separate from the Bologna process – and much earlier, in the 1980s. Why did universities’ experience of the Erasmus programme prompt them to become involved in the Bologna process?

OH: The Erasmus programme and the thematic networks were already in place and universities had years of experience in working together and organising exchanges between students and faculty. But they were experiencing a lot of problems between national and legislative frameworks. The Erasmus framework provided for individual mobility and some of the thematic networks developed joint study programmes with more structured student exchanges as well as organising intensive summer schools for doctoral students from the various universities. When the Bologna process was first formulated, this became an opportunity for university leaders to set an agenda about the changes needed to iron out administrative impediments to mobility and collaboration.

SW: I remember in the late 1980s I welcomed the Erasmus programme with great enthusiasm. There were lots of student exchanges in anthropology across Europe and students came back with ideas about different kinds of anthropology. It seemed to fit very well with my ideas of a university as a place of international, intellectual exchange.

OH: Yes, it started out as an initiative to increase or intensify European integration with a significant focus on the so-called European dimension. Students should have the opportunity to go abroad and learn about language and culture, and experience academia in another member state. This was before the European Union came into force in November 1993, when it was still mainly a European Economic Community. The rationality was that students would benefit individually and that Europe as a whole would benefit if people acquired knowledge and experience from living in another political system. It would
improve understanding and tolerance etc. In this regard it is very important to be aware that Erasmus student exchanges were based on the principle of mutual exchange, meaning that participating universities were not allowed to charge tuition fees.

From the beginning you could see universities received Erasmus positively but they also saw a risk in the longer run. I would say that the initiation of the Erasmus programme, along with the 1986 decision by member states to realise the common market by the end of 1992, were a strong impetus behind universities' formulation of the Magna Charta in 1988 with its clear position in favour of independent, autonomous universities.

**SW:** So, was the Magna Charta a reaction to the idea of universities becoming part of the common market, part of a marketised sector in Europe?

**OH:** Yes, and clearly indicating that no one in the university sector was in favour of the European Union becoming too much involved in higher education. When the decision to set up Erasmus was taken in 1985/1987, there was no clear judicial basis for the European Commission's involvement in the Rome Treaty.

**SW:** What? The Rome Treaty didn't give the EU a judicial basis for setting up Erasmus?

**OH:** No, but it did give the European Union a mandate to work in higher education but it was becoming possible during that period due to rulings from the European Court of Justice, which stated that higher education should be interpreted as included under the articles giving a mandate for the European Union to work in vocational education and training. Rulings from the European Court of Justice in the Gavier case (1985) and the Blaisot case (1988) changed the possibility for the European Union - and the Commission - to initiate actions in higher education.

**SW:** So, higher education came in as a kind of subset of vocational education and training? And it's the contribution of higher education to a skilled labour force in Europe that brings universities into the ambit of the EU?

**OH:** Exactly, and then the EU initiated Erasmus. Universities responded positively yet saw the need for the articulation of a clear stance about universities being autonomous, free, and independent of political influence in the Magna Charta.

**SW:** And who were the main actors behind that Magna Charta? Were they again the university leaders?

**OH:** Yes, it was the rector of European universities. Then in 1992, the Treaty of Maastricht, the Treaty of the European Union, explicitly included higher education within the framework of the treaty for the first time, but strongly restricting the principle of subsidiarity. That is, initiatives could only be taken if there was a huge European added value by doing it on a European level. This was partly a response to Erasmus and the rulings from the Court of Justice. By including higher education, though making it so strongly restricted by the principle of subsidiarity, it could be argued that this was a way for the member states to regain control of the Commission's actions in higher education, which had been opened up by the ruling from the courts.

**SW:** By placing higher education within the treaty, this narrows down the European Commission's room to manoeuvre?

**OH:** It does if I believe in the principle of subsidiarity. But experiences 15 years down the line clearly indicate that the principle of subsidiarity rarely has any influence today.

**SW:** When OMC comes onto the scene, that's a way to get independently acting universities or sovereign states to co-ordinate their activities - in a sense it operates on the principle of subsidiarity.

What you're describing is a prehistory of OMC starting with the Erasmus programme. Then at the point when the Bologna process starts, certain people were finding in practice that there were difficulties in operating Erasmus exchanges, like it's difficult to get a student's exam marks in Amsterdam translated into a system at Brighton, or wherever. There was an attraction for universities to get involved in Bologna because it could iron out some of those little technical details.

**OH:** There was also a huge attraction to member states because the lack of recognition for the periods of study abroad was prolonging study times unnecessarily and that was in complete contradiction to the original plan.
SW: Now that would not happen in England because there the student is at university for three years full stop. But in Denmark, for example, if a student goes to London for a semester or two and there is no way of translating the marks from their London exams into the Danish system, then that year spent at London University would just be extra to the three or five years they spent at the Danish university. You're arguing that the possibility of ironing out some of the bureaucratic difficulties that Erasmus was showing up was attractive to university leaders and was one of the reasons why the European University Association would have wanted to get involved in Bologna to start with.

OH: Yes. And at the time they also realised that the volume of international student mobility was exploding. The European University Association since its establishment clearly had its eye on the brain drain of students from Europe to the USA. In addition, there is a strong mobility pattern from Asia to the USA whereas Asians are not coming to Europe so much. EUA observed what had been going on in Australia, which has been the most aggressive country in this international higher education market for the past 20 years – higher education in Australia has advanced to the country's fifth or sixth biggest exporting industry, generating a lot of employment and investment in the economy. These trends clearly influenced the European university managements. There was also a problem within Europe, where international students mainly go to Britain, Germany and France and there was an interest to make it more spread out. An instrument initiated with that purpose is the Erasmus Mundus programme. This is a new European mobility programme funded by the European Union addressing most aspects of the Bologna process – ECTS, the degree structure, quality assurance mechanism and so forth. Here the overlap between the European Union and the intergovernmental Bologna Process becomes very concrete. One of the main criteria in the Erasmus Mundus programme is that universities from different countries should join in a consortium, a structured network corporation with the purpose of collectively offering a joint degree. That means that students have to attend at least two, but in many cases more universities as part of their studies. The Erasmus Mundus programme funds hugely attractive scholarships for third-country students, that is, students from outside the European Union, to participate in the degrees of these European consortia and move between the institutions.

SW: But European students aren't eligible for these European grants?

OH: Not for the time being. In the second phase of the Erasmus Mundus programme there will also be scholarships for European students, although they will not be as attractive as the scholarships for third-country students. It has turned out to be one of the major problems to have European students participating in these programmes without scholarships, because the criteria of mutual exchange, on which the Erasmus programme was based, is no longer maintained here.

SW: Why not?

OH: Because these programmes targeted the global market of higher education, students from third countries receive a scholarship to cover their fees and their living costs. Those who don't receive a scholarship, and that includes the European students, also have to pay fees if one or two of the consortium partners is located in a country where tuition fees is common policy.

SW: So what happens in the case of a consortium involving a Danish university, where university education is free? A Danish student on a normal programme wouldn't have to pay fees. But do they have to pay fees if they are a Danish student taking an element of an Erasmus Mundus course at a Danish university?

OH: It is very unclear for the time being and particularly interesting in the Danish case because the government issued an amendment to the University Act in 2005, stating that Danish universities participating in such an Erasmus Mundus consortium should ensure that Danish students would not be burdened with tuition fees, not even for the parts of the degree they take at universities in other countries. Within this National Framework the government tried to maintain the principle of mutual exchange, but the European Commission no longer maintained the principle of mutual exchange and had opened up the possibility
of charging fees. That meant that Danish universities either had to find Erasmus Mundus partners in countries that did not charge fees, which excluded the possibility of working with British universities, or breach Danish law, or become administratively creative. Danish universities have taken the third option and claimed that the consortium exists outside of the national context so as to free it from the national judicial regime. They argue that students, whether Danish, European or from a third country, are not enrolled at the Danish university, but at the consortium so that means they are not restricted by national law, and they can charge fees. However, the problem is that there exists no regulation for such an international arrangement and that leaves students in a situation outside judicial regimes.

Erasmus Mundus pointing to the future?

SW: What you’re describing here brings into question two of the strong themes that run through this interview. One is that the issue of government financing for higher education has been kept out of both the EU’s Erasmus programme and the Bologna process. Yet the Erasmus Mundus, whether intended or not, has brought that funding question up strongly. The other theme that has been running from the Magna Charta through to the idea of subsidiarity is that the universities should be treated as independent, and that states should be recognised as making their own decisions. In order to participate in a European programme, Danish universities involved in Erasmus Mundus are creating a construct which, in a sense, gives away their autonomy, if they’re voluntarily locating themselves in an international consortium in order to raise money from students to get themselves out of the tangle of the Danish law. That’s been the theme all the way through this interview: you participate, and participate and participate but who knows what game is being played? What do you think the game is now? What’s your current reading of the game that is being played out in Europe?

OH: The Erasmus Mundus programme is the first instrument that really stimulates implementation of all the aspects of the Bologna process at the institutional level. Institutions participating in Erasmus Mundus have to operationalise all the various aspects and instruments of Bologna. They have to have fully implemented the ECTS system. They have to issue the diploma supplement, which is another transparency tool, developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, in order to increase mobility. It provides a description of the qualification obtained and contains information on the student, the institution, the study programme and the level of qualification as well as the degree’s ranking in the higher education system. The first generation of Erasmus Mundus addressed only the second cycle of the degree structure (the MA), but the second generation of Erasmus Mundus now addresses all three levels of the degree structure. The idea is to develop a highly attractive European brand in the global market for higher education. In the long run, the aim is to create master courses capable of attracting many more international students than just those who get the scholarships. The argument is, that European universities, by participating in Erasmus Mundus, are strengthening their position in the global market for higher education. From the beginning, it has been compared with the American Fulbright programme with these very attractive scholarships. In the long run, the idea is that Erasmus Mundus will ensure contact with business leaders and politicians in the countries where the students come from when they go back home.

SW: And become business leaders and politicians.

OH: Most important is the branding aspect. They are now called Erasmus Mundus master courses but the initial communications from the Commission referred to them as the European Union’s master courses. The Latin trademark symbolically emphasizes the humanistic tradition and academic culture of Europe, but that doesn’t change the nature of the actual activity and structure. You could say that the European Union is no longer just supporting mobility in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. It’s actually initiating its own master degrees as an elite offer on top of national educational structures by establishing institutional networks of ‘excellence’. For the time being, in most cases, people would regard Erasmus Mundus courses as just another aspect within the national structure, as there are only a few of them. In due course, in a decade or so, the strategy will become
evident, that these courses establish a highly attractive elite structure above national degree structures. In the meantime Erasmus Mundus creates huge legislative problems for the member states, particularly regarding the question of fees in the countries in which education is free. Denmark, in comparison with other European countries, would probably be regarded as one of the more centrally regulated systems. Institutions do not themselves have the freedom to decide which master courses to offer or how to offer them; this is regulated centrally and you need approval from the Ministry. You could refer to Bourdieu (1996) and argue that the state is trying to maintain its monopoly on the issuing of cultural capital. In contrast, in Britain, for instance, universities decide for themselves what master degrees to offer, and with whom to collaborate. These differences mean that it is not that simple for universities to participate in the Erasmus Mundus and collectively issue a degree. When it depends on approval from the state, tensions emerge. In the current cases, Danish universities argue that they live up to national legislation, but in those instances where national legislation is in contradiction to the Erasmus Mundus programme they use the programme criteria as the legislative framework. The point here is that the programme criteria are not a legislative framework at all. But because they are the basis for funding, it is used to legitimize the introduction of tuition fees for Danish students as well.

Here you have a contradiction between national judicial regimes and the criteria from the European Union. The Erasmus Mundus programme is based on a rationality to increase universities’ international attractiveness. In Denmark at least, national laws so far prohibit universities from participating in co-operation with partner institutions requiring a tuition fee. They can only collaborate in such cases because the European Commission has created an opening. So universities either breach national law or stay out of Erasmus Mundus — or, as in this case, they come up with what you could call very ‘alternative’ or creative administrative practices.

By arguing in favour of the establishment of a consortium based outside the national judicial regime, Danish universities are voluntarily pressurizing their government to introduce tuition fees for national

as well as European students. This is a by-product of their aim to be part of a European trademark, the elite programme of the European Higher Education Area. The universities are targeting the increasing volume of international students, who are the main constituency in the global market for university education. By focusing their attention on this global market, they are, maybe inadvertently, bringing about a market for ‘home’ students within Europe. Throughout the story, there has been both a keen awareness of the emerging agenda to create a market in higher education, and at the same time a focus on ironing out administrative technicalities. It is by focusing on the latter, that the former is coming about.

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Standardising Europe: The Bologna Process and new modes of governing

ANDREAS FEJES

ABSTRACT
This article explores how the discourses of the Bologna Process have been accepted and adopted as the dominating ones in European higher education. It consists of a governmentality and discourse analysis inspired by Foucault and based on selected European and Swedish policy documents. The aims of the analysts are to illustrate how governing operates discursively and how it is legitimised, to identify what subjectivities are being shaped and fostered and to destabilise the taken-for-granted ideas of the present and so contribute to a space for reflection on how governing and power operate in higher education today.

KEYWORDS
Bologna Process, Foucault, governmentality, discourse analysis, lifelong learning, standardisation, higher education in Europe

Introduction
One of the major changes in higher education in Europe today is the Bologna Process, a declaration signed by 47 nations, including members of the European Union (EU) and several other countries (Londen Communiqué 2007). It aims at harmonising the higher educational systems in Europe. In texts on this issue, ideas of comparability, mobility, transparency, harmonisation, flexibility, shared European values and diversity are put forward as the means to create a European educational space. However, this policy area was originally outside the decision-making competence of the EU. Consequently, each nation has to choose whether or not to sign up to the Bologna Process. Many states and universities have now taken the narratives about harmonisation for granted and see this process as inevitable (Nóvoa 2002; Ahol...