EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
A NEO-GRAMSCIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Applying a neo-Gramscian perspective to the process of European integration in higher education reveals the history of the process, the origin of the idea of European dimension in education, how this idea evolved over time, and what the major factors are that could explain the process that is as old as European integration itself. The paper argues that the European integration in higher education is closely linked to the formation of transnational social forces in the capitalism. The ideas and interests of the social forces are primarily shaped by the social relations of production that reflects the structural changes in modes of production. In the context of European integration this is reflected by the capital-labour compromise and its eventual breakdown with the emerging neoliberal political and economic order, while in higher education it is the initial period of less integration in higher education, to building the European Higher Education Area in neoliberalism.

Content

List of Acronyms

EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
ECSC	European Coal and Steal Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EC	European Commission
HEI	Higher Education Institution

Introduction

Higher education in Europe has been undergoing fundamental changes during the past decade, mostly influenced by the Bologna Process. However, the changes and the transformation of higher education in Europe did not begin in the end of 1990s. The Bologna Process indeed represents a new chapter in the process of European cooperation in higher education. However they do not marking the beginning of the efforts to bring closer the systems of higher education in Europe. They are the latest and the most evident phase in a process that was historically shaped by the congruent effect of material and ideational aspects of the continuous struggle between the social forces, born out of the particular social relations of production in a transnational European integration context.

It is possible to trace down the origins of the European integration to the interwar idea of Pan-Europe subscribed to Coudenhove-Kalergi (1997), when elites and youth shared the ideal of a peaceful and united Europe. After the Second World War the need and desire for the prevention of future wars, balance in the emerging bi-polar world, economic progress, closer cooperation, and the rebuilding of devastated industries, brought European nations together. The European integration process was underway from the end of 1940s, and it continues to the present day. At the same initial time, we could find a broader sense of cooperation in Europe that encompasses social policies, culture, and education as well. It has been often cited that Jean Monnet said: "If I were to start again, I would start with culture" (Pace 2005, 60). In some sources, culture has been replaced by education (Sprokkereef 1993, 340 quoted in Corbett 2005, 12). On the other hand, Blitz (2003) claims that Monnet did not have a strong interest in education and that "there is little evidence to suggest that it was considered important to the original design of the Community" (198). Regardless of Monnet's exact words, it is difficult to dispute that there was a broader idea of cooperation in Europe that did not just cover economic,

but also political and social cooperation. However, the cooperation in the economic sphere was and still is the essential determinant of the dynamics of European integration. Economics should not be understood here in the narrow, neo-functionalist spillover sense, but as the production that determines social power relations, interests and ideas.

The history of European integration is diverse, and so is the history of the Europeanisation of higher education. It tells a story of successes and failures, and contains periods in which the process has advanced rapidly, and perhaps unexpectedly, but also periods in which it stalled, if not completely stopped and reversed. The ambition to have European education policy existed in some form from the very beginning of European integration, but it has not always materialised in the concrete policies. The objective of this paper is to explain why we have witnessed diverse developments of the European education dimension over time, and why and how today the countries that are not even members of the EU have come to voluntarily accept to converge their systems of higher education..

This paper does not equalise education policies within EU with the policies of the non-EU member states, and recognises that some of the processes defined as European are nor the outcome of decision-making within European institutions, but, like the Bologna process, represent voluntary cooperation of governments. However, the role of the European institutions in steering the process, providing advice and financial resources is an important actor beyond the EU. In addition, the national or the EU borders do not bind the organic intellectuals and transnational social forces.

To answer these research questions, I will critically engage with the European integration theories as the obvious starting point in explaining integration in one specific European area. Various mainstream integration theories have tried to explain the process that persisted for more

than sixty years in Europe. The major debate is between neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism, but recently there have been additions with the development of liberal intergovernmentalism, liberal constructivism, and multilevel governance. However, these approaches are "by their very design unable to conceptualise adequately power relations that are constitutive of capitalist market structures…[They] fail to account for the *structural power* that determines the particular trajectory of European integration" (Apeldoorn et al. 2003, 17). In analysing the problématique of this paper it would have been appropriate to use one of the new institutionalism approaches as well, especially historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. Although these approaches could be useful in analysing the role of ideas and their interaction with institutions, as will be elaborated on later, they are inadequate when attempting to grasp and analyse the given problem.

This paper will take as a point of departure the social relations of production, power relations and role of ideas as the key factors in shaping European integration. These theoretical foundations are present in the work of Antonio Gramsci, and they have been developed as the neo-Gramscian perspectives and applied to the analysis in the international political economy, international relations, and political sciences. The neo-Gramscian perspectives seems the most suitable for providing the answer to the research question and explaining the complexity of the European integration process of higher education. The paper argues that the European integration in higher education is closely tied to the formation of transnational social forces in the capitalism. The ideas and interests of the social forces are primarily shaped by the social relations of production that reflects the structural changes in modes of production.

This paper is organised in three chapters. Firstly, I will present the background of the process of European integration in higher education from the late 1940s to the present. Because of length constrains, this is a brief overview of the history of this process with the emphasis on

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the key events and stakeholders that have shaped the higher education in Europe. In the next chapter I will discuss the theoretical framework taken in this research, namely the neo-Gramscian perspective, and why some other approaches are insufficient for this paper's problématique. The third chapter represents the analytical application of the chosen theoretical approach to the history of Europeanisation of higher education. Finally, I will provide concluding remarks and reflect on the suitability of the theoretical approach in analysing the higher education reform process.

Chapter 1 – History of European Integration of Higher Education

European integration is a dynamic process that after the initial successes in the 1950s, experienced stagnation and crisis in the 1960s and 1970s, and then the revival in the 1980s that lasts with the small setbacks until the present day. Similarly, higher education in Europe has also experienced periods when the supranational activity of the European Communities[1] was more or less intensive. A historical account of the development of the European integration in higher education from the Messina conference to the Bologna Declaration reveals many tensions, and shows how the idea and interests of the key stakeholders changed over time.

It is usually understood that the European policymaking in education originated from extending mobility of labour in the 1970s (Neave 1984) to vocational training and education of migrant children. The European education and training policies are often justified "by reference to the goal of promoting within Europe a highly qualified and well-educated workforce, in order to contribute to the European competitiveness" (Hervey 1998, 110). The means to achieve this has been a recognition of qualifications throughout Europe for the mobile labour force. Other goals of the social policy in education is linked with reducing unemployment, and "promoting a sense of belonging to Europe and stressing the commonality in European culture and history" (Hervey 1998, 110).

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[1] The terms European Community and European Union (EU) are used in the paper to distinguish between European institutions in different time in history. The EU refers to the post Treaty of Maastricht (1992) setup, while the European Community considers institutions established prior to 1992.

The history of European integration in higher education is inseparably linked to vocational education, training, as well as to the social policy. While these policies were explicitly acknowledged in the Treaty of Rome, the establishment of the university institution was set by the EAEC. However, the constant expansions of the community competences led to the present conception of lifelong learning, which is the overarching EU education policy encompassing all levels and types of education.

In providing the historical background, the main methods consist of the literature review, official documents, and other secondary sources. I will draw from the comprehensive account provided by Corbett (2003, 2005), Pepin (2006), Neave (1984), and others. The history of history of the European community activity in the education filed has not been well researched. The publication by Corbett seams to have the most detailed academic account and analysis based on official documents, historical archives, interviews, newspapers, and other sources; hence it could be regarded as reliable resource.

This chapter is divided in three sections that describe the historical development of policies in higher education in the context of European integration from 1955 to the present. The sections could have been further divided into subsections with shorter time spans. Nevertheless, they do not represent an exhaustive and detailed historical account, but a brief overview of the key events that helps understand the factors that shape ideas and interests of the social forces.

1.1 From Messina to Rome: 1955-1957

The first explicitly expressed idea of extending European integration beyond economic cooperation took place at the Messina meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the six initial member

states of the European Coal and Steal Community (ECSC) in June 1955. The ECSC resolution adopted in the preparation of the Messina conference with the primary goal to revive the stalled European integration at that time, has an explicit reference to extending the mission of the Community to achieve not only economic, but also social progress (CECA 1958). This represents another piece in the mosaic of the constant widening and deepening of the European integration process, in this case to the social policy. Walter Hallstein, the German representative had a clear and persistent idea in mind: "The Federal Government hopes to show tangible testimony to young people of the desire for European union through the foundation of a European University to be created by the six ECSC states" (Palayret 1996, 43; quoted in Corbett 2005, 26). Even though the European University is not mentioned in the final Resolution, the idea remained to be discussed at the next meeting of the Foreign Ministers. Finally, the Treaty of Establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC), as a part of the Treaty of Rome from 1957, proclaims that "an institution of university status shall be established; the way in which it will function shall be determined by the council, acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission" (European Union 2010, 10) that should be submitted within a year. It opened the door for future discussion on establishing the European University.

1.2 The Conflicting Ideas of European Education: 1958-1969

The European Commission failed to reach an agreement on the status and functioning of the university, because "the six Member States had very different national university models" (Corbett 2003, 318). At the conference in Bonn in 1961 it was agreed that education "should not be part of Community competence" (Corbett 2003, 318) and that the educational issues should be decided on an intergovernmental basis. Hence, this represents a reversal in building the European education policy since it would be more difficult to reach consensus.

The backdrop of this failure is the conflicting idea about the role and potential of higher education. On one side, Hallstein believed in the potential of universities to benefit the industries in the common market and to create an 'European-minded elite', while on the other the French opposed it because this was an issue on national sovereignty, however, they recognised that university was an intergovernmental issue, and they saw a chance for their research and training institutions to benefit from contact with the rest of the world. Universities, especially in Germany also opposed the prospect of being instrumentalised as they did in the Third Reich, hence they held onto their recently regained autonomy (Rüegg 1999, 31-3). Corbett (2005) also points out the initiatives that brought the rectors of European universities together in the Rectors' Conference (CRE) for strengthening their cooperation and autonomy.

The report prepared in 1958 by Enrico Medi, the Euratom vice-president, "favoured the German idea that the European University should be used to promote integration" (Corbett 2005, 39). However, it created a new opposition from the universities and the French delegation, which favoured intergovernmental cooperation and any extension of it led to their disagreement.

The path taken by Etienne Hirsch, the new president of the Euratom Commission from 1959, was to link the "national level training with and research institutes" (Corbett 2003, 319), and to promote the European dimension in education through mobility programmes. The French reconsidered their isolated position and started supporting this proposal based on the potential such an institution could have for French research and training institutes. They favoured the idea that the institute should be located in France, and thus the French language could be promoted. On the other side, the Germans realised their Constitution did not allow for supporting the European university because higher education was in the competence of the

Ländern. However, this proposal failed because of President Charles de Gaulle's opposition to the idea, while for some others there was a problem of financing.

The Report of the Interim Committee on the European University from 1960 was a culmination of the efforts in building European higher education. It called for strengthening "the common heritage of European cultures and civilisations, of high level institutions which the community needs, and of universities extending their brilliance and influence (*'rayonnement'*) beyond national frontiers" (Corbett 2005, 45). This was a compromise between the diverse ideas of European involvement in higher education. The European University would have the role in European integration by covering the topics relevant for it. The research institutes gained access to Community funding for European related research. Finally, the HEIs should establish cooperation and exchange programmes, facilitated by development of common structural characteristics and programme harmonisation. However, as Corbett (2005) reports, this plan lacked clear financial support and legal basis in the treaties, and subsequently the report was rejected and the Euratom Commission lost competences in deciding on the European University and putting it under intergovernmental cooperation. The Hirsch proposal failed because of the lack of support from the key social group, in this case the rectors who persuaded and shared some of the view of their political representatives who were at the same time reluctant to oppose de Gaulle.

The intergovernmental cooperation in education was reflected in strengthening the position of the Council of Europe as a venue for cooperation in education, which was the first intergovernmental institution to promote cooperation in education. However, the Council of Europe was working slowly and it could not facilitate the calls, especially from the French minister of education at the time, Edgar Faure, for using the European level to conduct the national education reforms (Corbett 2005, 54-5). At the same time the European Community

was going through a crisis, reflected in opposing ideas about the supranational and intergovernmental cooperation in Europe. It culminated in the 'empty chair' crisis in 1965 over the financing of the common agricultural policy. Because of France's absence from the meetings, the European institutions could not operate. Finally, because of the risks of being isolated and facing the negative economic effect, France resumed negotiations in 1966.

Policies of the European completion of common market, the deepening of cooperation in new policy areas, enlargement as well as a return of the education policy to the European institutions happened at the Hague Summit in 1969, after de Gaulle suddenly retired. The new integration energy enabled several major achievements such as opening the process of political unification and enlargement when the UK, Ireland and Denmark became a member state in 1973.

1.3 Securing the European Cooperation in Education: 1969-1976

The negotiations on the closer cooperation in the field of education were initiated in the wake of the Hague summit and renewed interest in European integration. The Ministers of education were aware that for running Europe in the future there was a need for training and educating European minded people and they agreed to pursue active cooperation in the field (Neave 1984, 6). Italy finally got approval for establishing the European University Institute in Florence in 1972, and the working group for organising the European Centre for the Development of Education was set up, defining the relationship with the Council of Ministers of Education that was seen by the French minister of Education Olivier Guichard as the permanent instrument of the Community policymaking. The EEC was expanding into new policy areas, such as culture, industry, research, technology, regions, Social Fund, and simultaneously the educational issues

were emerging in the other policy areas and taken by eight Directorates-General (Corbett 2005, 68). It all led to resolving the issues that stalled cooperation the previous period and the greater significance of higher education in policymaking.

The cooperation in education was finally confirmed in the beginning of the 1970s, but it still took place in between intergovernmental and community decision-making. The tension between Council and Commission was resolved by their dual membership in the decision making body. The Ministers of education finally formalised cooperation by consensus and enabled future action in the educational related policymaking.. However, the common action did not entail any standardisation and harmonisation policies, which were considered 'undesirable and unrealistic'. Cooperation was called between HEIs, educational systems, for recognition of study abroad periods, diplomas, and for promotion of mobility of teachers, researches and students. The next problem was obtaining funding for these cooperation policies, but MEP approved the Action programme in education and accompanying budget lines in 1975 that made cooperation in higher education a reality.

In summary, the important factor for this success was that at this time it was not deliberated "whether the Community *should* play a role in higher education/education. Rather it was what the appropriate mechanisms were for advancing cooperation." This period represents skilful balancing between education related issues of building cultural identity and state sovereignty. The idea of cooperating beyond the economic sphere persisted over time and finally corresponded to the situation and enabled the Commission to play a prominent role and to secure the funding for the Action programme.

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1.4 The European Mobility Programmes: 1977-1987

Building on the Action programme, the Commission initiated a number of successful mobility programmes that subsequently flourished into the Erasmus decision, which clearly linked education and mobility to the training for employment and also made the EC closer to the people. However, the decision was made after eighteen months of negotiation - "the disagreement were the budget and the legal basis" (Pepin 2006, 116). Based on the reciprocity principle, the Commission proposed programmes for "academic mobility, joint curriculum development, and credit transfer" (Corbett 2003, 324). The mobility programme was associated with vocational training, because of the need to be regarded as intergovernmental and not contested. The focus became preparing the transition from studies to employment, bringing it closer to the single market policies. The new president of the Commission Delors "had a highly developed idea of education and the part it could play in his strategy for advancing European integration via the single market" (Corbett 2005, 121). He recognised in the single market a human dimension, possibilities for enabling employment and contributing to the economic progress. The European Court of Justice (1985) in the Gravier case ruled that any form of education that prepares for employment could be regarded as vocational education, and hence extended Community intervention in higher education. Thus, the ECJ's ruling gave the Erasmus programme a new legislative basis and the final decision of 1987 was based on articles 128 and 235 of the EEC Treaty. The programme became very popular, it strengthened relationships between the Community citizens and it built the 'sense of Europe' among the youth. Some argued that "it is possible that, in the long term, Europeans of the future may be 'Europeanised' through their education systems" (Hervey 1998, 112). This gave some credibility and strengthened the position of the Commission, which was now free to pursue further integration policies in higher education, especially after adoption of the Single European Act in 1986, creation of the single market, and the European Union in 1992.

1.5 From Bologna to Bologna and the European Higher Education Area: 1988-2010 and beyond

The end of the cold war marked the beginning of political and economic reforms in Europe, which was reflected in European integration and higher education. The European Community expanded its social policy competences by the 1987 Single European Act, the Social Charter in 1989, and the Social Policy Protocol of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which listed education as one of the Union's competencies. In the education area, the universities confirmed their autonomy in 1988 Magna Charta Universitatum. A decade later, the Ministers of Education of four countries called for harmonisation of higher education systems in Europe in the Sorbonne Declaration. Finally, in 1999 thirty signatories of the Bologna Declaration set the goals of greater compatibility, comparability and convergence of the higher education systems (Wächter 2004). On the EU level, the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 proclaimed Europe to become "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world" (European Council 2000). Finally, in the 2010 the Bologna Process became the European Higher Education Area that continues to consolidate EHEA.

To understand European integration, it is necessary to understand the social relations of production and institutional arrangements that exist at both the EU and domestic level. These events are closely related to the structural push to the knowledge-based economy and the EU's single market, prominence of the various actors and the strategy change from 'hard law' to 'soft law' in regulating higher education expressed by the Open Method of Coordination.

In summary, the history of the European integration in higher education consists of phases in which the ideas of establishing cooperation and eventually congruence persisted among the

group of intellectuals who were in charge of this process. They did not always share the opinion of the method in which this could happen, evident in the debate over the community competences. However, they agreed to establish European University Institute from general decision in 1958 to final approval in 1971, introduced mobility programmes in 1960, decided that education should be developed outside in 1961, and later within Community institutions in 1969, initiated the Action programme in 1976, and Erasums in 1987 (Corbett 2005, 189). Outside the Community framework the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations marked a new era in European higher education, but the EU came back to steer the process in terms of the Lisbon goals and Europe 2020 strategy as a full member of the EHEA.

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Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework and Methodology:

the Neo-Gramscian Perspective

This chapter will discuss the theoretical framework suitable for explaining the tensions in the historical process of European integration in higher education, and reasons why the European higher education policy has developed in the way it did. For a comprehensive understanding of these tensions, the theoretical framework has to take into consideration both the historical development engendered by the ideas, institutions, and actors, as well as the interaction between power, capital, and social relations of production in structuring the social reality. The neo-Gramscian perspective represents the theoretical approach able to answer the research question because of the capacity to reveal deep hegemonic structures that shape reality by looking into its dialectical relationship between material and ideational features. To answer the research question, I will employ the neo-Gramscian perspectives of Robert Cox, its application to the European integration by Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, and to some extent Stephen Gill's perspectives, especially on the role of ideas that does not contradict the conceptions of the other key authors. This implies that there is no single neo-Gramscian school (Gill 1993, 2), rather as Bieler and Morton (2001) argue we should be talking about various Neo-Gramscian perspectives, with the accent on the plural form.

This chapter will briefly reflect on the writing of Antonio Gramsci, then it will discuss the neo-Gramscian perspectives and key concepts used in this paper, and finally elaborate on the methodological application of the neo-Gramscian perspective to the problématique of European integration in higher education, the limitations of such an approach, and alternative theoretical approaches that could have been used. 2.1 Neo-Gramscian Perspectives

The neo-Gramscian perspectives belong to critical constructivism that is based on historical materialism. At the same time it differs from the other forms of constructivism, and from orthodox Marxism. An important place is given to "the role of consciousness, ideology and culture in the reproduction and transformation of social formations, and hence also to the role of collective (class) agency in producing these intersubjective forces" (Apeldoorn 2002, 17).

Antonio Gramsci was the leader of the Communist party of Italy and because of his opposition to the Mussolini's fascist regime he was imprisoned in 1926. During the eight years he spent there, he hand wrote nearly 3000 pages that were successfully smuggled out of the prison. These rather fragmentary writings published as the Prison Notebooks served as an inspiration to many philosophers, political scientists, politicians, and others. Therefore Gramsci himself did not produce a particular and comprehensive theoretical framework that could be used in the analysis, but his ideas were interpreted in varying ways. Gramsci offered a view of the world he lived in, and general guidelines for its analysis by redefining historical materialism from the drawbacks of Marxist economism and structuralism. He did not offer answers to all imaginable questions, and hence should not be treated as a prophet who holds a key for all problems. As Robert Cox (1987) stated, his own perspective "may be considered by some readers as developments of Gramsci's thought rather than propositions directly attributable to him in a literal sense" (408). Hence, "it is not possible to speak about one specific neo-Gramscian approach representing a cohesive *school*" (Bieler and Morton 2001, 17), but various perspectives and core concepts able to overcome the limitations of some other approaches in analysing social reality, including European integration in higher education. The neo-Gramscian perspective I will employ is concerned, as Apeldoorn (2001) stated, "with the socio-economic content of, or the social purpose underpinning, the European project" (71), that is closely linked to the European integration in higher education.

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2.1.1 Key Analytical Concepts of the Neo-Gramscian Perspectives

This paper uses the core concepts of the neo-Gramscian perspective developed by Robert Cox, Andreas Bieler, Adam David Morton, Stephen Gill, and Bastiaan van Apeldoorn. These concepts are: social forces, social relations of production, history, state, role of ideas, hegemony, historic bloc, organic intellectuals, and historical materialism.

Social Forces

For Gramsci the most important category of actors are social forces, defined by the process of production. The identity and interests of the social forces are shaped in the relations of production. There could be many different fractions of social forces. For example, they could be comprised of heterogeneous groups on national or transnational level, or in the relation to the production. Domestically and internationally oriented capital and labour do not share the same identity and interests, because those are shaped by the production for either domestic or international market (Bieler and Morton 2001, 17), hence these groups could behave differently in relation to the process of European integration.

Social Relations of Production

The point of departure for the neo-Gramscian perspective is production. As Cox (1987) stated "production creates the material basis for all forms of social existence, and the ways in which human efforts are combined in productive processes affect all other aspects of social life, including the polity" (1). Production and power are closely interrelated, as production enables power to be exercised, but this power also shapes the way in which production is organised. Social relations of production are the concrete historical forms in which the production takes

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place. The emphasis of the analysis should be on the relations of production that "are to a large extent dependent upon, and constituted by, ideational structures in the sense of laws, rules, norms and ideas that enable capital to exploit labour" (Apeldoorn 2002, 17).

History

The emphasis on history taken by the neo-Gramscian perspective adopted in this paper does not imply *austere historicism*. It is to underline the significance of context in the analysis and understanding of the social phenomena and change. In addition, "there are no inevitable developments in history" (Bieler and Morton 2001, 18), and the political processes under analysis, including the Europeanisation of higher education, are the results of the struggle between the social forces without the predetermined outcome.

The complexity of the world order needs to be analysed in the context of the dynamic of history, because "history is always in the making, in a complex and dialectical interplay between agency, structure, consciousness and action, within what Fernand Braudel (1981, 29), has termed the *limits of the possible*" (Gill 1993, 9). Political and social change is happening within these limits that are variable and shaped by the social structure, which can be changed by agency. For Gramsci, history is not just chain of events, but also the "*ensemble* of social relations configured by the social structures ('the situation') which is the basic unit of analysis, rather than individual agents, be they consumers, firms, states or interest groups, interacting in a (potentially) rule-governed way in the 'political market-place' at a given moment of conjuncture" (Gill 1993a, 24).

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State

The state for the neo-Gramscians "is regarded as a structure within which and through which social forces operate rather than an actor in its own right" (Bieler and Morton 2001, 18). The state cannot be defined outside the notion of society, because the social forces are configured within the state. Gramsci (1971) stated that "one might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion" (263). Furthermore, "the state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (Gramsci 1971, 244). However, the particular state form depends on the way in which the political, social and economic forces operate within the given historical context.

Role of Ideas

The neo-Gramscian perspective takes into account the role of idea, as part of the superstructure. They are, on one hand, intersubjective meanings that shape their understanding of the world and position in the social structure, and on the other, collective images, that legitimise the policies of hegemonic project on behalf of organic intellectuals (Bieler and Morton 2001, 21). Holman (2001) argues that economic interest shape ideas and preferences, but "ideas play an important role in shaping or structuring economic and, indeed, political interests" (168). They exist in a dialectical, mutually reinforcing relationship. Moreover, they are not limited to the national boundaries and may go beyond domestic arrangement between state and civil society.

Hegemony

Hegemony for Gramsci is not simply dominance and power. The state coercion is not enough for establishing and sustaining hegemony. It encompasses the consent and support from the civil society i.e. "the ensemble of organisms commonly called private" (Gramsci 1971, 12), which is a constitutive element of the state. Their role is to provide legitimacy to the hegemony, and to incorporate and neutralise any opposing social movement and their interests. Hegemony is also "based on a coherent conjunction or fit between a configuration of material power, the prevalent collective image or world order … and a set of institutions which administer that order with a certain semblance or universality" (Cox 1981, 139). Through the lenses of the relation of political forces, specifically homogeneity of social classes it is possible to understand how consent is built and hegemony achieved. The political consciousness on the economic-corporate level, according to Gramsci (1971), refers to the solidarity of members of professional groups. The next step is the consciousness based on the economic interest of all members of a social class. Finally, when one becomes aware that their corporate interests transcends their economic class, and "can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too" (181) is when the structure is replaced by the complex superstructure. The winning ideology represented by the party then brings about "not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity" (ibid), thus producing the hegemony of dominant social force. The state enables this dominant group to extend its power by presenting their goals and interests as favourable for all other subordinated groups, as a "motor force of a universal expansion" (182). Incorporation of the interests of subordinated groups implies that the original interests and ideology of the hegemonic group is somewhat transformed and constantly reproduced by the struggle between opposing social forces, and their inner fractions. Apeldoorn (2002) argues that "we should not reify any dominant or hegemonic ideology, but always ask how that ideology came about: that is

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to say, locate it in the wider politico-ideological struggle out of which it emerged" (20). This is also necessary in the European context.

Hegemony in the international context should be linked to the international political and economic arrangement by the international organisation and the global civil society. That could more difficult to assert than looking for a hegemonic structure within the European context. However, there is a substantial framework of rules, norms, and values in the European supranational institutions and civil society, locked-in the structure of common market production, exchange and free movement of capital, goods, services and labour.

Historic Bloc

The historic bloc is important for the construction of hegemony, but also "structures and superstructures form an historical bloc" (Gramsci 1971, 366). This refers to the material capabilities, and institutionalised set of ideas, rules and practices of social forces within a state. Given that the state represents the complexity of relations between the state and civil society, the synthesis between the leading social forces that represents them forms a historic bloc, which may develop into hegemony.

Organic Intellectuals

Organic intellectuals play a role in disseminating ideas and organising the social forces in order to give consent to the hegemonic order. "Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of en essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give homogeneity and awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields" (Gramsci 1971, 5).

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They base the idea on the economic interest, but it also must be able to transcend that interest and incorporate the social and political sphere. Thus it "brings the interests of the leading class into harmony with those of subordinate classes and incorporates these other interests into an ideology expressed in universal terms" (Cox 1983, 168 in Bieler 2001, 22).

Historical Materialism

Historical materialism is not trapped in the analysis of history, but it considers the problems in the context of the events that took place in the past and present, and also look to the future, but not in the positivist sense of determining the laws of behaviour in social reality. The social relations of production take the primacy and "any analysis of the world we live in must, from the standpoint of historical materialism, be grounded in an understanding of the way in which human beings have organised the production and reproduction of their material lives" Apeldoorn et al. 2003, 33).

Looking the European integration in higher education through the neo-Gramscian perspective, these concepts, will be helpful in revealing and explaining the tensions in this process.

2.2 Methodology

The methodological task of this research is to identify the social forces and class fractions, on national, European and transnational level, that have been supporting the rival ideas of European integration of higher education. I am also concerned with how they the social forces interacted to create hegemony, and what relations or production shaped their identity, and how ideas were intertwined with the interest that were crucial in shaping European integration in higher education.

Tracking down the historical developments in European integration in education, it is possible to confirm correspondence between structural changes in economy and higher education policy. The changes in politics and economics in the 1970s manifested in a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism (Boyer 1990; Lipietz 1992), from embedded liberalism to neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism (Gill 2003), should, according to historical materialism, be reflected in other spheres, such as education. After the initial attempts to push forward the idea of having some type of education policy in the European communities in the 1950s, stalemate in the 1960, the breakthrough finally happened in the late 1970s and 1980s, as identified by Corbett (2005) and Pepin (2006). Indeed, there is a general correspondence in events.

The Mainstream European integration theories could have been used in the analysis. However, I adopt a position that they are unable to grasp the social relations of production, and how ideas and interests are shaped. Neo-functionalism developed by Ernst Haas describes integration as a self-sustaining process driven by the spillover effect, referring to creation of policies in one area, leads to the transfer of policies to the other areas including salient issues like sovereignty. Individuals are understood as rational actors who perceive their interest, the spillover becomes automatic and inevitable, and there is no conception of power between social groups. On the other hand, intergovernmentalism starts with a notion of 'national preference formation' and 'two-level game' at national and international level, where governments are the key actors that shape and drive the integration based on the minimum set of preferences of the large states. Focusing too much on the interstate bargaining, this approach, neglects the role of ideas and interest groups beyond domestic level, and it does not explain national policy preference. The state is still considered to be a black box. Hence, it is not able to give answers to the social purpose of integration.

Anne Corbett (2003) used historical institutionalism in her analysis, and it could have been used in this paper because its goal is to trace the history. This approach gives significance to the role of ideas in building institutions and focus on institutional change in the period of crisis, termed the 'critical junctures'. However, it is difficult to define these junctures, there could be disagreement over the time frames of periods of 'stasis', and it creates a path dependent type of explanation, hence the explanations given by this approach are reductionist and resemble the neo-functionalist bound spillover effect. On the other hand, Corbett (2005) applied sociological institutionalism that defines institutions more broadly to include the 'frames of meaning' that should explain why individuals accept institutional rules and explains institutional change through enhancement of legitimacy of institution (Hall and Taylor 1996) because they follow the 'logic of appropriateness' (March and Olsen 2009). Nevertheless, sociological institutionalism does not explain how institutions are formed and it assumes uniformity of behaviour within institution and it overlooks diversity within institutions, and that the power and relations of production could as well shape these ideas and institutions.

Because of all this, it is not enough to utilise historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, or policy process analysis in trying to explain why these events happened in that particular manner and time. As it will be shown, the idea of European education policy was present, but it could not directly lead to the agreement of all stakeholders in the time of policy window. It was not simply the result of tireless work of policy entrepreneurs that skilfully took the advantage of the emergent policy window, as Corbett (2005) argues. It was rather the result of fundamental and structural changes and conditions in the economy, relations between capital, labour and state, and the formation of the transatlantic historic bloc. Of course, the key actors were important in making things happen, but their efforts would not haven been successful, if socio-economic and political conditions did not allow it. Structures of the social relations of production at that time are key in understanding how the agency of the key actors had an effect.

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That is reason why the other theoretical frameworks, criticised earlier, are reductionist in explaining why and how change happens. These focus only on actors and key historic events, without taking into consideration the dynamic interaction of general long-term historic development, institutions, ideas, and relations of production, making the story incomplete. The interactions between these elements, especially struggle between social forces, in their totality have created the history, such as creation of the ECSC, and further European integration process. Therefore, the European integration in education cannot be analysed and understood without and outside these developments.

This is not to argue that the production relations determined the European integration process altogether either in general or specifically in education, but that, following neo-Gramscian perspectives, the production relations and material interests created favourable conditions for these ideas to materialise in concrete policies. The pre-existing idea of European education area became possible only when the transnational capitalist class reaffirmed supremacy, though sets of compromises, policies, economic restructuring, and political movement to the neo-conservatism (Gill 19933).

In the development of methodology, this paper adopts at least one of Gill's (1993) recommendations for research agenda – "the concrete historical study of the emerging world order, in terms of its economic, political, and socio-cultural dimensions, with a view to its emerging contradictions, and the limits and possibilities these imply for different collectives" (16).

2.3 The European Community/Union as the Object of Analysis

Gramsci originally developed all these concepts with reference to the state as the main object of analysis. However, these concepts do not exist in the national context alone, isolated from the world order. Today even more than before, the effects of the global developments are crucial for the national relations of production, historic blocs, and other Gramscian concepts. However, Gramsci (1971) acknowledge "that international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique and historically concrete combinations" (182) of political forces. The relevance of the international sphere as the level of analysis is evident in regards to the European integration process. Here Cox's (1987) idea of internationalising the state, understood in the process of building historic bloc of social forces and class solidarity beyond states is applicable. Especially in the post-war period, the national economic and political system is integrated into the global production and exchange, where finances, services, and knowledge skills are more important.

Taking Apeldoorn's (2002) redefinition of the problématique of the European integration to be the social purpose of European order, the neo-Gramscian perspectives seem even more appropriate for analysis of the process of higher education integration in Europe. The mainstream theories of European integration have focused too much on the issue of transfer of sovereignty from the member states to the supranational level, and neglected the structure of the European order underpinned by the social purpose. Apeldoorn (2002) continues by stating "the starting point of the present study is that [social purpose] may be applied to the level of an emergent European order" (12). Contesting forms of capitalism and integration models in different phases of the history of integration had different social purposes. It is not possible to understand the social purpose of Europe, the entire history of integration as well as the

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Europeanisation of higher education, outside the context of the social relations of production, and ideas that accompanied them in these different historical phases.

The EU is considered to be a political system in its own right (Hix 1994), furthermore "the EU can be perceived as an enduring structure of governance, a macro region within the capitalist world economy with its specific, historically-determined socio-economic and political structures, where supranational institutions such as the European Parliament and the Commission adopt similar roles to their counterparts within states, and complex policy-making process link a host of interest groups to decision-making" (Bieler and Morton 2001a, 214)

2.4 Limitations and Critique to the Neo-Gramscian Perspective

To analyse the considerable problématique of European integration in higher education, it would be the most appropriate to discuss and incorporate several critical theory approaches. Besides the approach used in this paper, there are other relevant theoretical frameworks that in their combination could produce a more comprehensive and sharpened account of the processes of the creation of European higher education. Those are foremost, the French Régulation School, specifically with their elaboration of forms of capitalism, and dialectics of regimes of accumulation and modes of régulation, that could be easily combined with the neo-Gramscian concept of how ideas, rules, norms and values are institutionalised. Furthermore, the neo-Gramscian interpretation of the social forces and their interaction with production would be valuable addition to the French Régulation. Additional edge to the analysis would be engaging with the structure-agency debate of Margaret Archer (1995) and her morphogenetic approach, especially the conception of historicist time, and how these accounts could be combined for understanding the social world (Bieler and Morton 2001b). However, this endeavour would

require more space than this paper allows, hence while acknowledging that in some future research this would be a desirable path, currently it is not feasible.

Chapter 3 – Analysis

The revival of the European integration in the 1980s and the support social forces gave to the project cannot be understood outside the general trends that affected the world capitalist order. As many authors showed, there is not one form of capitalism (Hall and Sockice 2001; Rhodes and Apeldoorn 1997; Boyer 2005), but many diverse rivalry types of capitalism that are contesting economic, political, social and ideological order. The struggle of social forces gave birth to the forms of transnational historic blocs, which are trying to gain support by all stakeholders involved in the integration process to achieve hegemony.

European integration and its effect on education have to be analysed in the context of the same economic developments after the world war, cold war,Marshall plan, capital-labour compromise in Fordism, crisis of Fordism, restructuring of social forces, global financial markets, deregulation, privatisation, monetary policies of price stability, neoliberalism, relations of power, and restructuring of social forces. After looking at European integration with a neo-Gramscian lense, this paper will compare and analyse these events in politics and economy to the historical overview of cooperation in higher education.

3.1 Neo-Gramscian perspective on European Integration

The constructivist ontology of neo-Gramscian perspective analyse both state and society, understood as a capitalist society that is structured by social relations of production. Hence, by analysing the social forces involved in the making of the European polity, it is possible to answer the question of how European integration came about. The analysis should include the role of

ideas and the struggle of transnational social forces and conceptualise the European Community/Union as a site of that struggle.

European higher education cooperation should be situated within socio-cultural level of transformations. According to Gill (1993), the emerging world order may be undergoing the transformation at three levels: *economic*, through restructuring of production, exchange and finance; *political*, including institutional changes and forms of the state; and *socio-cultural*, how the "global restructuring of political and economic levels also entails challenges to the embedded sets of social structures, ideas and practices, thus promoting, as well as constraining the possibilities of change" (9). In order to fully understand these transformations, it is necessary to give due attention to all there levels of transformation, and bear in mind the question *for whom and for what purpose* these changes are taking place.

The consent of main social forces, their understood interests, and incorporated ideas made the revival of the European integration possible – "it includes state interest associated with the German-dominated unification project, large-scale finance and productive capital of global reach, as well as European companies, and associated privileged workers and smaller firms" (Gill 2001, 54). These comprise of ICT companies, financial services and consultancy, small and medium enterprises, as well as educational businesses, architects, designers, managers, and others who help to build the corporate market image and identity, thus legitimising the prevailing hegemonic order. The capacity for alternative social movement to question the hegemony is reduced, as the civil society, comprised of all these groups and constitutive element of the state, has been co-opted by the neoliberal hegemony by adopting and adjusting their various interest and ideas, hence they have found their privileged place in the world order, and are reluctant to jeopardise it, since they could potentially have more to lose than to gain from any change.

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3.2 The First Three Decades of European Integration and Initiation of European Higher Education Policies

The history of the higher education integration in Europe reveals a close historical match with the history of European integration in general. Therefore, it was necessary to look at these two together. Applying the neo-Gramscian perspective of European integration to the cooperation in education, tells us history of the social relations of production that underpins the integration process. More precisely, we should focus on transnational class formation that characterises the capitalist world order, and whose "material interest and key ideas (within a broader political consciousness) are bound up with the progressive transnationalisation and liberalisation of the global political economy" (Gill 1990, 94). The origins of the transnational class formation can be found in the industrialised Britain of eighteen-century (van der Pijl 1998), but after the Second World War it expanded globally under the *Pax Americana*. Initiation of the European project was closely linked with the US led Marshall Plan for reconstruction of Europe devastated in the war. Van der Pijl (2001) identified US corporate liberalism, which corresponds to the Fordist regime of accumulation in French Régulation School (Aglietta 1987; Lipietz 1992; Boyer 2002), and its welfare system as the hegemonic concept of capitalist development underpinning the European integration. It emerged in the New Deal type of policies of mass production, mass consumption, protectionist state intervention, and social protection as the result of compromise with organised labour.

The struggle in the early days of European integration was more evident in the context of the different types of the economic orders, specifically between the communist threat and Americanisation. Hence the initial European integration also had an effect in firmly locking-in

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European countries in the western type of democracy and capitalism represented by the Fordist regime of accumulation (Boyer 1990; Lipietz 1992)..

The Marshall Plan launched by the US had a similar and crucial effect in persuading social forces to support creation of the European Community. The social forces of that time were slowly, by surely co-opted, and instead of the radical demands for fundamental changes of the relations of production, those demands were diluted to the better working conditions for privileged labour. The capital-labour consensus of Keynesian policies was born founded on mass production, mass consumption, and generous welfare system, and with it the challenge to the prevailing system was buried.

The efforts in building agreement on the European University reflect the interest and ideas of the transnational class. However, as this group is fragmentary along the lines of the somewhat different domestic type of capitalism, their expression of interests in the European level could be also different.

3.3 Re-launching of the Integration in Europe and Higher Education in the 1980s

The period of crisis after the 'thirty glorious years' changed the power relations in Europe. The old class compromise of Fordism cracked, because the welfare protection could not sustain the pressure of falling productivity gains caused by over-accumulation and fall of profit. Collective contracts and bargaining were guaranteed to the labour, but when the crisis pressure intensified and unemployment increased, the trade unions lost the power that could influence the system. The new historic bloc, formed by the fraction group of privileged high-skill labour, which had secure jobs and welfare, together with international and European oriented corporatist capital,

hoped to gain more by supporting the new neoliberal agenda of competitiveness. As Cox (2001) stated "so hegemonic have neoliberal ideas of economic management become that the leaders of the left have basically accepted them. They have come forward with a compromise which attempts to maintain a certain level of social services while endorsing measures to encourage flexibility in the labour market consistent with neoliberal principles" (x). The new power relations of social forces, defined by the changed structure of material forces of production accompanied with the ideology, reveal how hegemony was build with the new historic bloc that enabled transition to neoliberalism.

It was more difficult to dismantle the welfare system in Europe because of the deeply entrenched relations between the social forces. As already mentioned, all social forces have their fractions that do not always share the same ideas and interests. That was obvious for the less organised labour groups, which is partially built by a more privileged group that was keen to support policies of liberalisation, deregulation and competition because it could lead to increased economic benefits. Other group of labour optimistically believed that the internal market would lead to political and social union. Finally Delors persuaded trade unions that neoliberalism would not undermine the social policies (Bieling 2001). Transnational fraction of capital formed a historic bloc "which has generated the ideas, institutions, and material capabilities for a global shift towards more neoliberal forms of state and which crucially influences the development of European integration in a way compatible with, not oppose to, globalisation" (Bieler and Morton 2001, 213).

During the Delors commission, the vision of Social Europe gained momentum, and reflected the social policy in the Single European Act of 1986, the Social Charter of 1989, and finally in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. However, the social-democratic project of European integration, emblematic of Delors, was defeated by the rival neoliberal project. As was stated in

the theoretical chapter, the hegemonic project is a result of struggle between contending, opposing project, and finally the dominant project absorbs the subordinate one. In the case of the social-democratic model, following Apeldoorn's (2002) analysis, this happened because the organic intellectuals of that ideology assumed the functionalist logic and accepted the primacy of the market integration as a precondition of social cohesion. Thus, Delors' commission wholeheartedly supported the integration, while at the same time tried to incorporate social-democratic elements into it, hoping it will transcend to the stronger political union and subsequently social Europe. However, exactly because of poor results of these attempts, the social-democratic project was defeated, but in order for the neoliberal project to incorporate the former one, it had to be somewhat adjusted by these social policy additions. In other words, "in ideological terms, Maastricht was, more than the 1992 programme, a project not just of big business but also of social-democratic political and social forces" (Apeldoorn 2002, 156).

The Delors commission had a strong social component in reviving the European integration process beyond economic community. The 'human dimension of the single market' was necessary in the view of Delors to sustain and transform European communities. Apeldoorn (2006, 2008) assesses the Delors' project of European integration as a social-democratic model that competed with (at least) two other models – of neoliberal and neo-mercantilist projects. In the end the neoliberal model prevailed.

Many academics (Neave 1984; Beukel 2001) place the beginning of European higher education history with the negotiations and breakthrough launching of the Erasmus programme in the 1980s. The Erasmus decision was an outcome of the historical process in which the idea of university dimension in Europe persisted among the organic intellectuals, represented by the key figures in the Community institutions. It cannot be narrowly explained only by the ECJ's Gravier ruling, the push to the single market or the dispute over legislative competences in the

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higher education policies. These issues need to be understood as a part of the same process when social forces were struggling over how concrete policies in the Community should be developed. Finally, relevant social forces reached the consensus when they accepted the position of the emerging hegemonic group that the new programme could benefit the domestic economy and common market. Hervey (1998) concludes "education and vocational training policy [became] a tool in the creation of a more competitive EU" (133-4). However, the ideas of bringing diverse student body and additional funding to HEIs, and providing their citizens with European identity and more employment opportunities that correspond to the changing needs of the market, were also influential for granting support. This is the context that is able explain the re-emergence of the European integration in education in the 1980s, that paved the road to the Bologna Process that followed at the end of 1990s.

The neo-Gramscian perspective is better able to explain this than the intergovernmentalism, since the individualistic otology is incapable of grasping the structural power relation and the key events were taking place at the supranational rather than intergovernmental level, while the self-sustaining neo-functionalist spillover should have almost an automatic effect in extending the 'creeping competences' of the Community (Pollack (1994), which was not the case.

3.4 The European Higher Education Area

The Bologna Declaration in 1999 proclaimed the goal of creating a comparable and compatible system of (EHEA), and togente with Lisbon stragegy created a new chapter in European education policy.

The detailed account of the history of the European higher education policy provided by Anne Corbett (2003, 2005, 2008) shows that some of the key political actors had a clear idea about community that exceeded cooperation and integration in the economic sphere. The idea about social and 'people's Europe' was evident in the motivations that drove the integration in the non-economic policy areas, including education. Corbett (2005) argues that the policy entrepreneurs took advantage of the policy windows during the key ministerial meetings to put forward the ideas of extending cooperation to the other sectors. The initial meeting education cooperation was put forward in Messina is one of the examples. However, the deal was not sealed at the Bonn meeting in 1961, not just because the key politicians of the time disagreed about the type and form of cooperation, but because they reflected the interests of the social force they represented, both domestically and at European level. The European cooperation was loose in the early years of the European integration. It focused on narrow set of policies, and they did not perceive the need to extend that cooperation to a less relevant sector. Of course, there are politicians with vision and capacity to assess the potential of future developments, such as extending cooperation to social policy. Nonetheless, only when the interests of their social group corresponded to extending the cooperation in education, the key decision-makers supported it. That happened when the pressure of economic crisis made them re-evaluate the solutions that could bring back their economies. In other words, the idea was already present and it played a role in shaping the interest, but only when material conditions were calling for a new idea how to resolve the organic crisis.

The European policies places education in service of economy, i.e. in the capitalist type of economy within European 'embedded neoliberalism'. This is also helpful in explaining why integration in education happened in Europe and not somewhere else. The European polity is unique in sustaining the 'magic formula' of competitiveness and social cohesion. Pursuing just one or the other in different context would not have the same result, as it is evident in stalled

attempts to copy the European integration in other parts of the world, where the result, if any, is usually something less than the EU. There is no recipe for perfect regional integration, and especially the European integration cannot serve as an ideal model, because it is the result of the ongoing struggle between social forces that emerged in a specific historical context of class formation. The same applies to the EHEA, which is deeply bound to the social relations of production in the European context.

The role of ideas and their ability to influence policy formation is important, but there is not just one set of ideas that floated around. The ideas of different European integration competed against each other, and the upper hand of one set of ideas in one point of time explains greater expansion of policy competences in one specific area, while expansion in the other area, its stagnation or even reversal, can be explained by the dominant ideas in the other time. It should not be forgotten that interests shape the ideas as well, and they reflect the social relations of production. For example, initiation of the Erasmus programme was skilfully combined with Comett programme in vocational training and education, that enabled acquiring the ten times bigger budget for exchange and mobility programmes (Richonnier 'think big' Corbett 2008, 70). On the other hand the reverse happened when the European University was excluded from the Council conclusions in the 1960s, because, among the other reasons, the French blockade during de Gaulle presidency. There is no single dominant idea or motivation that completely drives all actions of the actors. There is always a mix and combination of motivations, ideas and interests, that directs their action in the realm of what is politically possible. The key actors in the process of European integration did not share absolutely the same ideas about how the integration and cooperation in the Education sector should develop. The complexities of their individual motivations are constrained by the personal distinct interests, background, national and community politics, and belonging to a particular social group. However, this does not mean that

there was no shared idea about European integration in education. The overarching idea was thus modified by constraints of politics and interests.

The alternative counter hegemony could develop in Europe from its civil society, as history is not predetermined but the result of the struggle between the social forces. These social forces always challenge the hegemonic order, which needs to constantly reassert itself. The rival projects could develop, however the structural power of capital is deeply locked-in neoliberal Europe, hence, any alternative is easily absorbed. The opportunity for genuinely challenging the hegemony would have to wait for the structural crisis of capitalism that could distort the existing power relations.

Conclusion

Education systems generate knowledge that can have a profound effect on the way in which individuals conceive and analyse the social reality. The production of particular type of knowledge represents power, and is in many ways instrumental in creating organic intellectuals and upholding the prevailing hegemonic order. Through the dissemination of sets of ideas, rules, norms and beliefs about the education system through organic intellectuals can have an effect in maintaining the consent of the social forces in civil society and spreading the worldview. Education system play a fundamental role in this process, as we have witnessed the proliferation of academic epistemic communities with a specific agenda, such as the Mont Pelerin Society, the 'Chicago boys', or simply the "predominance of the positivist and behaviourist traditions in Anglo-Saxon academia" (Gill 1993a, 46). The global trend of privatisation of higher education and research, cost-sharing solutions to the funding problem, in conjuncture with the recent push towards the knowledge-based economy, enables the survival and sustainability of a hegemonic social order. If production defines social relations and power, bounds ideational to the material interests, and guides behaviour, then the ideas and interests of the hegemonic social force, which is in position of power and controls production, also sets boundaries to the ideas and interests of subordinated social groups, which consents to supporting the social order believing that they will also benefit out of it. In the process of commodification of education, these interests and ideas become institutionalised through the supply and demand structure, where the most profitable type of education that correspond most closely to the skill labour needs of the economy is increasing in supply, is also the one that is the most demanded, as it can be the guarantee of the high wage employment. The vicious circle is in place, reducing the possibilities for an alternative system to emerge. In academia there is "a process of social and intellectual enclosure ensures that adherents and their theorisations are insulated from critical dialogue with those of

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contending perspectives or paradigm. The dominant paradigm, for its adherents, assumes the mantle, as it were, of near, in not absolute, truth" (Gill 1993a, 47-8). The appropriate intellectual and skill set of manpower could be produced in that kind of knowledge structure, which can fulfil the needs of a political and economic community, such as the EU. This is not to claim that this scenario is taking place within European higher education, but that there is recognition, either at conscious or unconscious level by the hegemonic social group, that education has the potential in mainstreaming the political and economic thinking, and that it can set boundaries for policy framework development.

The policy innovation expressed by the European Community's interest in higher education, cannot be only explained by the overarching ideology or specific material interests. These have to be taken in their dialectical totality, mutually reinforcing and constituting elements, and placed within the historical struggle between social forces defined by the social relations of production. The individuals who accept and promote these ideas and interests belong to the historic bloc that creates the hegemonic structure. Because of their position of power, achieved through their place in the production process, and the authority of the organic intellectuals, who produce particular knowledge and worldview, they find themselves in the crucial decision making positions. However, there is not only one uniform idea and interest that this social group of organic intellectuals represent, but a contestation between several of these groups while trying to attain hegemony. This was especially evident in the early days of European integration, when the type, purpose, and future direction of the emerging polity were unclear. In the struggle between the historic contesting groups over taking a decisive role in this process, the particular mode of integration was born. It was not instrumental, path-dependent, intergovernmental or neo-functional spillover that created this unique European polity, but exactly the above explained struggle between contending ideas and interests of the key social forces.

The paper argued that from a Neo-Gramscian perspective the European integration in higher education is closely linked to the formation of transnational social forces in the capitalism. The ideas and interests of the social forces are primarily shaped by the social relations of production that reflects the structural changes in modes of production, that Europe expenced at the same time. The differences and incomparability of the higher education systems across Europe became apparent when the first mobility programmes were implemented. Gill's (2003) neo-Gramscian application to the West European context of political and economic conditions, the post World War II achievements and goals of socialism, social democracy, and communism "have been couched in terms of the corporate or reformist moments of consciousness, that is, with welfare nationalism, understood primarily as a national project […] seams to have been not the replacement of capitalism, but the civilising of the capitalist mode of production, in effect conferring it with a *hegemonic* aura" (54). Following Gill, similar could be said for the education sector, both on national and European level – where it is more evident. The ongoing reforms of the higher education seen in the wider political and economic context could be understood as another conformation to the hegemonic aura of capitalist mode of production. Even though the Bologna process emerged as a voluntary, inter-university initiative, the idea about converging higher education systems did not come from nowhere. It reflected the changes and processes in the hegemonic capitalist structure. It also represents the *longue durée* of the ongoing idea and attempts for European integration in higher education, as documented by Corbett (2005), that conforms and co-opts higher education system to the requirements of the modern day, post-Fordist type of capitalism.

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