Comparing Higher Education Policies in Central and Eastern Europe

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Abstract: The article assesses whether the higher education policies of selected transformation countries have converged or diverged both before and after the Bologna Process and attempts to determine the external and internal factors of influence on policy making. The CEE countries share the common experience of communist rule with a highly centralized and ideology-based higher education policy. During the transformation and reform phase in the 1990s the external dimension of higher education policy clearly gained momentum through processes of internationalization, Europeanization and increasing competitive pressures. Both in western and eastern Europe, the structures and organizational patterns in higher education are subject to enormous pressures for change, in particular within the framework of the Bologna Process. The analysis focuses on issues of university autonomy, which comprises the distribution of power between the state, universities and the professoriate/faculties. This in turn has a direct impact on university governance, i.e. coordination mechanisms, distribution of financial resources, strategic orientation, appointment of staff, setting research and teaching profiles, etc. As a conceptual framework for addressing the direction of policy drift, we draw on three ideal types of governance developed in the literature, the “Humboldt” model of academic self-regulation, the market-oriented model, and the state-control model.

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1. Introduction

This article presents the preliminary results of the research project “Comparing Higher Education Policies in Central and Eastern Europe”. The structures and institutions of higher education (HE) across Europe are currently subject to tremendous pressures for reform, triggered primarily by increased international competition and the so-called Bologna Process. Against the background of increasing numbers of students, dwindling state funds, and external competition, eastern and western European universities have been in a state of transition for some 15 years now. To achieve the goals of greater efficiency and competitiveness, the methods and instruments of higher education management are being redesigned, while governments are increasingly delegating regulatory activities to the universities and other institutions (Goedegebuure et al. 1993: 9). At the same time, the Bologna Process is stimulating nation-states to draw overarching measures potentially aimed at the convergence of European HE systems (Rakic 2001; Neave 1996; 2003).

This comparative study addresses how the interplay between pre-existing models, the socio-economic transition, and the Bologna Process has impacted the evolution of HE in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The far-reaching efforts to democratize and align themselves with western European economic and political institutions have uprooted communist HE structures and profoundly altered governance systems. Governance, as we conceive it, comprises patterns of control, coordination and the allocation of autonomy between the state, professoriate, university management, and other societal actors. Autonomy is a prerequisite for universities to react to the changing needs of society and be accountable for their responses. It is also a condition for implementing new approaches to university governance and thus directly linked to institutional outputs (Felt 2003). The analysis falls back on three historical and contemporary visions of university governance – the originally French state-control model, the German-based model of academic self-rule, and the Anglo-American market-oriented model (see Clark 1983). Although these models no longer exist in pure form, they remain anchored in the modern-day university practice and collective memory and function as poles towards which HE systems may converge (see Olsen 2005). By examining the potential (re-) diffusion of western models into CEE, we apply a convergence approach to a policy area traditionally regulated and coordinated at the national level (Field 2003; Neave 2003).

The study addresses an area yet to be examined by the political science and convergence literature and results in a comparative analysis of public HE policies of four new EU members – Poland (PL), the Czech Republic (CZ), Romania (RO), and Bulgaria (BG). Despite a common communist heritage, these countries

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1 Special thanks are given to the Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung for generous funding and members of the Chair for Comparative Public Policy of the University of Konstanz for helpful comments.
2 For a comprehensive theory-driven study on convergence in study degrees in western Europe, see Witte (2006).
3 The analysis limits itself to long-standing public universities, as historical legacies are important variables in addressing the scope and direction of convergence. Public universities are the primary target of the state’s overall HE policy and find themselves in an ongoing negotiation process over funding, admissions conditions and general legislative parameters. Moreover, they generally enjoy a higher level of prestige among students, academics and employers (Vlk 2006: 154), while private institutions often restrict themselves to one or two disciplines (e.g. business management).
have entered the transformation and Bologna Process from different starting points, in particular with respect to pre-communist legacies and the communist pathway (Neave 2003a: 23; Hendrichová 1998: 76).

2. Historical parameters

Due to its tumultuous and inconsistent path of development and the sheer magnitude of the current reform processes, CEE higher education stands out as a particularly worthwhile object of analysis for scholars interested in policy transfer and convergence. Polities in CEE have frequently been subject to the imposition of foreign models, from Austria-Hungary, Tsarist Russia, or the USSR. In fact, the earliest efforts at establishing universities in Central Europe were guided by the emulation of the original university models of Bologna and Paris (see Altbach 1998). The subsequent phase was then marked by the non-coercive transfer of institutions based on various European models (Humboldt, Napoleonic, and Anglo-Saxon). In the communist phase, the Soviet HE model was coercively implanted within the existing framework (see Connelly 2001). And since the collapse of the planned economy, foreign models have been repeatedly invoked by foreign and domestic scholars, consultants, and think-tanks to vitalize stagnating policy domains (Jacoby 2001: 171; Tomusk 1999).

The paradox of the CEE university is its dichotomy between institutional endurance and repeated institutional makeovers. On the one hand, national systems have been continually coerced to redefine their relationship with the nation state or policy framework of imperial powers. On the other hand, the universities of CEE are marked by a remarkable degree of institutional continuity and endurance, bolstered by the powerful institutional memory inherent to HE (Neave/van Vught 1991: x). Until 1945, the German or “Humboldtian” concept of HE transferred from western Europe was prevalent in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. The French or “Napoleonic” model of state-serving elite academic institutions and state regulation was emulated in Russia and Romania (Scott 2002: 140-141). Despite traces of German traditions and periodically heavy state control (Kiossev 2001), Bulgaria had attempted to borrow and put into practice Anglo-Saxon notions of university self-management in the early 20th century, despite persistent vertical state control (Gocheva 2002).

The reforms undertaken by the communist regimes not only eradicated notions of autonomy and academic freedom, but also imposed all-embracing institutional constraints and formal directives. Education policy was integrated into overall societal planning measures, carried out by central state planning commissions (Schimank 1995: 21). Most importantly, the implanted Soviet HE structures thrived on heavy vertical and horizontal control. Vertical authority was exerted by means of directives aligning higher education with political and socio-economic objectives, while horizontal control was exerted by the allocation of academic and administrative positions to party members (ibid 1995: 21).

The radical makeover of the economy, political system and production patterns after 1989 entails gargantuan institutional tasks for nascent democracies within an extremely compact timeframe. Unlike their western
counterparts, CEE universities are faced with a constellation of “simultaneous transition” (Offe 1991; Radó 2001). Not only is CEE higher education challenged by the burdens with which western Europe is also struggling (e.g. massification, funding, and output) (Neave 2003a: 20), but also dilemmas particular to their special circumstances, such as dismantling a system of manpower planning, the restoration of self-governance, and autonomy. Liberated from the shackles of fully fledged bureaucratic and ideological control, CEE universities are also increasingly entrenched in a transnational environment of dynamic interactivity (Bleikle 2001; Hackl 2001; Neave 1996). Exposed to a myriad of internal and external forces and points of reference, HE policy-makers have embarked on a highly uncertain pathway. The given circumstances have provided the impetus not only for the renaissance of past models and unique domestic strategies, but also a platform for the spread of policy models conveyed through international processes of communication and exchange, in particular European integration and the Bologna Process.

The Bologna Declaration includes no mention of harmonization, rather attempts to strike a viable balance between change and continuity in the midst of competition. Its underlying open method of coordination (EU Commission 2006; see Witte 2006) is conceived as an instrument to assist member states in developing their own coherent and transparent policies where common policies are not feasible. Instead of clear-cut legislation, it seeks to set joint objectives to be reached by setting benchmarks and employing comparative tools to stimulate innovation (EU Commission 2006). The system of joint-objectives translated into national action plans and assessed through consultative follow-up (and pressure) may in turn promote the dissemination of best practice (Huisman/van der Wende 2004: 40-41; see Walter 2005), in particular into the volatile CEE HE systems. Besides generating new horizontal modes of interaction, the national implementation of Bologna is likely to draw attention to other pressing issues, creating snowballing effects (Neave 2005). In other words, a European lens may shed light on the incompatibilities between the features of CEE systems and the pressing demands of the knowledge economy, globalization and the transnational flow of academics. As it addresses a broad range of issues like the knowledge society and staggering competitiveness, the Bologna Process may be used by national policy-makers to lend legitimacy to domestic reforms of governance which exceed the actual scope of the declaration.

3. State of the Art – CEE Higher Education
Numerous observers have analyzed CEE university reforms within a radically altered socio-economic context. In the first stage (1990-1995), authors concentrated on the detachment of the academic system from the economic system with which it was artificially linked (Gorga 2002; Scott 2002; Radó 2001). Analysts were subsequently concerned with how universities coped with the difficulties associated with restored autonomy, liberalization and system diversification (Gorga 2002: 9; Scott 2002). Issues of governance and management for the sake of stabilization were also addressed by the literature (Radó 2001; Boiadjieva 2005).

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4 For the general context, see Gorga (2002); Scott (2002); Radó (2001); Bremer (1997); Hüfner (1995) Marga (1997); Mittner (2003); Sadlak (1995); Tomusk (1999; 2001); Hendrichová (1998); Kwiek (2003); Westerheijden (1998); for Bulgaria, see Slavova (2002); Popov (2001); Simeonova (1995); for Poland van Beek (1995); Duczmal (2003); for Romania Mihai/escu/Vlasceanu (1994); Nicolescu (2002); Popa (2000); for Czech Republic Provazník et al. (1995); Pabian (2007); for Slovakia Malova / Lastic (2000).
As the relationship between the state and HE institutions was put on stable footing, the policy debate was increasingly conducted with a focus on internal participation, management, funding, and quality assurance (see Zelvys 2004; van der Wende / Westerheijden 2003). Issues of marketization also began to circulate in the relevant literature. This led to a slight shift away from mere narrative accounts towards specific market-oriented policy instruments (see Duczmal 2002; 2006). Scholars are also increasingly embedding the analysis within the burgeoning international dimension. This entails the impact of the knowledge society (Scott 2002; 2000; Gorga 2002), but also the drive to re-link CEE higher education with western Europe (Aaviksoo 1997).

However, the overwhelming majority of such studies do not attempt to leave the descriptive level, let alone draw on theoretical notions from the social sciences. Hence, the object of study at hand remains under-researched and dominated by unsystematic essay-like accounts, which only insufficiently integrate the driving forces behind policy developments. Moreover, many insightful accounts of CEE higher education are based not so much on scientific analysis, rather on the personal experience of policy-makers (e.g. Cerych 2002; Marga 1997). Partial exceptions to the above mentioned critique are the more sophisticated analyses by “masters of the trade” such as Scott (2000; 2002), File/Goedegebuure (2003) and Neave (2003a). Such authors strive to construct a coherent synopsis of tensions between historical legacies and national and international demands. Scott (2002; 2000) is among the few authors to address governance and steering issues, offering a fruitful account of the impact of autonomy, accountability, and marketization in reshaping the relationship between the state and HE. Although comparative observations are made, he does not apply a comparative research design, rather offers a synopsis of independent accounts. Thus, the impact of historical continuity and domestic and transnational change on policy-making is not systematically elaborated and country-specific differences not theorized. This lack of methodological and theoretical clarity is also evident in Neave (2003a), who determines a shift towards market-based governance in CEE. However, his results were reached in a rather unsystematic manner and by observation without comparative empirical data.

3.1 A convergence perspective
This analysis proposes a policy convergence approach, which integrates not only the historical starting points of the examined countries, but also the channels and mechanisms by which policy change takes place across countries and time. Convergence is essentially understood as “the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes, and performances” (Kerr 1983: 3). Due to greater economic and institutional interlinkages between nation states, a presumption prevails that states will eventually adopt increasingly similar policies and even governance structures over time. A number of explanatory factors for convergent policy outcomes have been discussed in the literature (Tews 2002: 8; Knill 2005). Holzinger/Knill (2005) classify five central mechanisms: Parallel problem pressure, harmonization through international legal standards, regulatory competition, and transnational communication. Of these, the most crucial convergence mechanism in HE is likely to be transnational communication. Despite the absence of binding legislation and direct coercion, transnational communication channels may facilitate the exchange of
information and experiences, as well as mutual lesson drawing and learning among national policy-makers. For example, transnational communication in an open environment can promote the elaboration and diffusion of the most promising policy suggestions and strategies, which in turn promotes the *emulation* of best practices – even without binding legislation. DiMaggio / Powell (1991), for example, stress how national bureaucracies and policy-makers embrace external practices and institutions perceived to be most effective. Actors may also seek to safeguard their legitimacy within a competitive and interactive environment by voluntarily adjusting policies on the basis of comparison, evaluation, and benchmarking.

4. Theoretical framework

To address the extent and degree of convergence, we draw on *institutional isomorphism*. Isomorphism falls under the category of “transnational communication” as a convergence mechanism (Holzinger/Knill 2005). Isomorphism stresses how units in a population are compelled to become more alike when faced with the same set of environmental challenges (DiMaggio/Powell 1991: 66). It accommodates the notion that change is a mixture of factors resulting from both external forces as well as the context of a particular unit, i.e. universities. It pinpoints the rationale for institutional change and convergence in the normative power of leading ideas and concepts. Isomorphism bears the advantage that it overlaps and incorporates mechanisms of emulation, transnational policy promotion and lesson-drawing.

**Normative** isomorphism views convergence as a consequence of professionalization, i.e. the collective struggle of actors to define the conditions and methods of their work (Larson 1977 cit. in DiMaggio/Powell 1983: 70). Applied to HE, institutional interlinkages between policy makers create mutual awareness among actors that they are part of common enterprise. Organizational norms diffuse rapidly through webs of networks, while facilitating the exchange of information. The logic behind this is that groups of policy makers share a common perception of pressures and strategies for adaptation despite different cultural and national backgrounds (DiMaggio/Powell 1983; Rakic 2001). Individual actors, in turn, internalize the shared norms and ideas and translate them into concrete policy.

**Mimetic** isomorphism is driven by uncertainty, in particular when organizational technologies and processes are poorly understood, goals ambiguous and future developments uncertain (DiMaggio/Powell 1983: 151). Internally, unclear or contradictory goals and unavailability of required resources may lead to uncertainty in everyday university operations. Externally, uncertainty may result from intensified competition and the unclear outcome of the Bologna Process. Mimetic isomorphism is enhanced by the desire not to be left behind institutional or technological innovations and hence compels stakeholders to emulate best practice. In other words, organizations rationally model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful, thus leading to greater homogenization.

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5 The term “elsewhere” is most likely in the spatial sense, but can also be of a temporal nature, when policy makers search for solutions from their own history – a very plausible scenario following the dismantling of imposed Soviet structures
Isomorphic processes are facilitated by transnational communication and underlying policy networks and institutional interlinkages. Following Beerkens (2002) HE networks are strategic inter-university alliances. Essentially, they constitute loosely-coupled systems fragmented across faculties, HE institutions and offices, which facilitate the cross-border flow of knowledge. Moreover, universities are nested within an overarching web of non-governmental, international organizations which streamline HE activities, facilitate mobility, and spread information. Finally, HE networks include both state and non-state actors, who may act as agents of transfer. For example, Stone (2004: 553) cites the OECD as an agent of transfer by establishing networks of senior officials, organizing conferences, collective publications, and most importantly “forward thinking” on standards.

However, what is particularly apparent, when examining networks of universities around the world is their diversity in terms of objectives and values as well as their frequent lack of a clearly delineated centre and periphery. Inter-university networks are spread across a multitude of local, national, and international circumstances (Beerkens 2002). Despite being at the core of global information exchange, academia is vested in a web of uneven, porous and ever changing asymmetric networks of various compositions. Academia manoeuvres within fragmented linkages across faculties, schools, and offices, and is embedded in networks based both on compatibility and competition.

Following the assumption of the convergent effects of isomorphism, we must examine the nature and depth of HE networks existing in the pre-Bologna and Bologna phase. As for the pre-Bologna phase, we expect a high degree of diversity in terms of the scope and nature of the policy networks. This is substantiated, on the one hand, by the loosely-coupled highly fragmented nature of HE networks. On the other hand, there was no supranational level of HE in Europe to provide guidance and mutual coordination and oversight to CEE countries in the aftermath of communism. Hence, interlinkages between CEE university management, academics, state education policy-makers starkly differed with regard to their depth, nature and orientation. Thus, although we can expect isomorphic processes in the early transformation phase, these processes were mediated through scattered and porous networks, and may shift HE policies in different directions.

4.1 Bologna as a convergence-promoting environment

We argue that the Bologna Process has particularly enhanced the conditions isomorphism, with convergence being a likely effect. For decades, state and non-state HE actors have been linked within loose institutional arrangements. The Bologna Process, however, creates a tightly-knit transnational higher education regime that facilitates communication and the elaboration of norms and common solutions. Firstly, it provides a structured platform driven by norm- and rule-oriented problem-specific coordination (see Walter 2005: 112). In other words, it functions as a constitutive, integrative institutional framework (see Vaira 2004; Witte 2005). Secondly, Bologna regime steers communicative processes and bundles the forces of homogenization, not least with regard to HE discourse (Felt 2003: 7). At the same time, the Bologna platform has become a bourse of interests and ideas (Radaelli 2000: 29). Hence, the process is likely to facilitate the elaboration of
innovative policy models and emulation of models perceived as successful, which may profoundly effect patterns of coordination, control, and ultimately governance. Thirdly, the Bologna Process radiates pressure for national systems to assert their legitimacy in an increasingly competitive international environment and in the face of “international scrutiny” (see Holzinger/Knill 2005).

In the midst of uncertainty with regard to future developments, organizations are prone to model themselves according best practice or draw on externally promoted models as a reference for national reform. In order to avoid looking like laggards, national HE systems are likely to embrace practices regarded as legitimate and successful in the broader social environment (DiMaggio/Powell 1991: 70). Hence, isomorphism is a common strategy for laggards, e.g. new EU countries, to “catch up” in the context of the integration process.

4.2 Historical institutionalist approaches

However, isomorphic processes and transfer are by no means automatic and only one of various options. If imitation takes place, it may be carried out selectively, and in line with national opportunity structures. In fact, the uncertainty triggering isomorphic processes by no means is alleviated when isomorphism actually takes place. Uncertainty may persist as to what elements of a policy should be transferred and what to maintain and discard from traditional norms, practices, and beliefs. Moreover, policy “receivers” may interpret elements of policies differently than initially intended. Hence, imitation can be of different depths or orders – shallow, tactical, opportunistic or incomplete (Stone 2004: 549). Emulated policies are perceived in line with national circumstances, diminishing the prospects of fully-fledged isomorphism. Once underway, the initial intent of transfer and emulation may be watered down by institutional constraints and local realities. Despite the momentum that the European dimension has gained, it may not necessarily replace the nation state as the monolithic, territorially defined referential community for HE (see Neave 2003).

Competing visions of HE set against not only diversified national organizational traditions, but also unequal administrative steering capacity make the impact of European HE integration all but certain in post-communist Europe. The obstacles to reform are compounded by the “bottom-heavy” character of HE, marked by its resistance to change and administrative culture, which often appear to be “set in stone” (Neave 2005: 17). We attempt to do justice to these long-standing traditions by drawing on the insights from historical institutionalism. One of the main critiques of institutional isomorphism and convergence approaches is their strong emphasis on the external determination of organizations and frequent neglect of embedded historical patterns (see Perrow 1986). Domestic responses may be shaped or mediated by embedded structures and institutions. International trends viewed as legitimate may be “downloaded” differently into existing political and academic frameworks. By scrutinizing procedures, routines, and norms embedded in organizational structures, historical institutionalism offers clues on the distinctiveness of national outcomes (Hall/Taylor 1996: 937) and demonstrates how past decision-making patterns are reiterated in present situations in a path-dependent manner. National and local politics, economy and culture
metabolize, translate, and reshape global trends, e.g. marketization in higher education, in the face of their cultures, histories, needs, practices and institutional framework (Vaira 2004).

The university stands out as a historical institution *par excellence*, marked by an enduring set of rules and organized practices, and relative continuity. The rules and practices by which universities are governed have a value in themselves, making universities highly resilient towards changing external settings. Well-embedded institutions also reflect the historical experience of a community and may prove to be highly difficult to uproot. HE remains involved in quasi pact-based long-term commitments towards society and science (Olsen 2005) (i.e. as a vehicle for national homogenization). This institutional memory may form the bedrock upon which concepts of governance and autonomy rest (Neave/van Vught 1991: x), in which vested interests and their underlying normative structures may quickly filter out change. Thus, even external models viewed as successful may pose challenges to beliefs and institutional identities, resulting in resistance and institutional inertia.

This historical legitimacy in CEE may be drawn from two different times – the pre-communist and communist phase. In the former case, the design of new institutions may occur through the replication of old or spatially distant ones (Offe 1993: 17). A typical attitude of policy-makers in the CEECs is the return to the “continuity of history”, which was disrupted by the imposition of communist rule (Radó 2001: 14). Thus, policy makers may draw inspiration and legitimacy from model from past of own society – e.g. renaissance nationalism and related institutions of the late 19th–early 20th century.

Different countries demonstrated different degrees of centralization and vertical control and the detachment from state monopoly after 1989 does not necessarily mean that universities have completely emancipated themselves from the previous coordination structures (see Tucker 2000). Hence, historically entrenched patterns of action cannot be uprooted overnight (see McLeish 2003), as decision-makers have an inherent tendency to cling to existing patterns. Thus, the institutional fabric established over the communist phase may indeed continue to impact the steering and structuring of HE systems in the post-communist phase (File/Goedegebuure 2003: 218).

5. Operationalization of dependent variable
Our dependent variable is defined as convergence in governance systems in the course of the transformation and Bologna Process. Although the Bologna Process calls on universities to adapt to changing external and internal demands, it remains ambiguous with regard to the means and instruments for achieving these objectives. The declaration does not bypass issues of university autonomy and governance, but essentially leaves it up to the member states to define their course of action. The present HE “landscape” is marked by an array of plausible visions and ideals of the modern university. Thus, if European integration triggers convergence to a common model, it remains uncertain on what notions it may be based and what specific aspects of academic life it may affect. Drawing on models of university governance by Clark (1983) and
Olsen (2005), we now distinguish between three ideal-types, towards which post-communist HE systems may (re-)converge.⁶

(1) The state-authority model

Universities are state-operated institutions (Clark 1983). The state coordinates most aspects of HE, e.g. admission, curricula, nomination of personnel. Universities are subject to formal administrative control and granted relatively little autonomy. The state plays the role of a “guardian” (Neave 1996; 2004) and actively influences internal matters like quality assurance, efficiency and university-business relations (Neave/Van Vught 1991: xi-xxii).⁷ Autonomy, support and funding are delegated depending on universities’ effectiveness in achieving predefined goals. This explains the close oversight by the ministry, which is manifested in the high degree of hierarchy. Uniform legislation in combination with standardized national procedures – e.g. accession and employment, pay scales – bonds universities to the central government. The state-authority model enjoys relative popularity in developing and transitional societies. Centralized governance is viewed as instrumental to regimes interested in nation (re-)building efforts (Clark: 1983: 153). HE can serve the formation of national culture and consensus, but also promote socio-economic transition.

(2) University as a self-governing community of scholars

Founded upon Humboldt’s principles, this model has paved the foundations for HE in Germany and much of pre-communist Central Europe (Scott 2002: 140-141). Its guiding organizational principle is described by some as academic self-governance and by sceptics as academic oligarchy, implying thus weak university management and a strong dose of self-regulation and collegial control (DeBoer/Goedegebuure 2003: 215). The model ideally is based on a state-university partnership, governed by principles of corporatism and collective agreement. The dominant academic principle is that of freedom of research and teaching (Neave 1996: 35; Frackmann / de Weert 1993). However, the state remains a potent actor thanks to diverse planning and financial laws limiting the scope of self-governance. Nevertheless, the state enables universities to establish normative and constitutive principles of their own without being subject to external design (Olsen 2005: 10). This concept is marked by the lack of coordination with industrial and/or political goals. Socio-economic needs are not streamlined into academic activities and student placement. Instead, the pure Humboldt model is based on an inseparable link between research and teaching. Hence, the university is committed to the search for truth through intellectual freedom - regardless of its immediate utility, benefit or political convenience (Olsen 2005: 8).⁸ Paramount to this model is the professorial chair system, in which each chair constitutes a core organizational unit (Schimank 2002: 8). Once appointed, the occupants of

⁶ It shall be noted here that none of these models exists in its purest form and that each of them can in fact be broken down into sub-types or mix-types. Nevertheless, they provides a broad, structured framework to track shifts in the balance of power between market, academic and state forces with regard to a multitude of aspects of university governance.
⁷ This notion of the university has profoundly shaped HE in France, Spain, Sweden and not least, the Soviet Union and its satellites, albeit within the bounds of the Leninist-Marxist doctrine.
⁸ This detachment between scientific and socioeconomic demands, frequently described with catchwords such as the “Republic of Science” or “Ivory Tower” (Olsen 2005; Neave 2003a), is demonstrated by the lack of comprehensive performance criteria as regards the quality of teaching, the selection of students, and pay scales.
professorial chairs constitute bastions of authority at the micro-level, or as Clark put it “small monopolies in thousand parts” (1983: 140). When acting as a “federation” of chairs (Sadlak 1995), they possess a formidable power to block initiatives of the government or university management.9

(3) University as a market-oriented service enterprise

Market-oriented models contend that universities function most effectively when operating as economic enterprises for regional or global markets (see Marginson/Considine 2000). Entrepreneurial methods are regarded as legitimate organizational principles (Clark 1998). Jongbloed (2003) defines marketization10 policies as ‘policies that are aimed at strengthening student choice and liberalizing markets in order to increase the quality and variety of services…’. The main thrust of power lies not with the professorate, rather with university management, who strategically steers and positions the institution. Management sees itself in the role of a producer and entrepreneur, which offers academic services to students and external stakeholders who assume the role of quasi-consumers. It holds significant autonomy with regard to personnel, financial, and substantial matters. Government involvement entails regulation and incentives, rather than directives or manpower planning (Olsen 2005: 10; Niklasson 1995), while institutions remain financially dependent on private and business donors as well as tuition. Governance through competition is viewed to offer incentives to improve teaching, research, and other academic services to the benefit of broader society. Subsequently, the “entrepreneurial” university has come to dominate current discourse (Clark 1998; Felt 2003 17-18), as it purportedly facilitates institutional adaptation and innovation. As a result New Public Management ideas and techniques from private enterprises enjoy a high status as governance mechanisms, while the forces of competition are intended to enable rapid adaptation to new constraints and opportunities (Ferlie et al. 1996).

Illustration 1: Clark’s Coordination Triangle – Organizational Models of HE

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9 See Schimank (2002: 8) for how this power is manifested in concrete terms.
10 Marketization in HE may include privatization, although this is not invariably the case
5.1 Definition of empirical indicators

The classification draws on Clark’s logic (1983) that HE is a tug-of-war between state, market and academic forces (see Niklasson 1995). For an empirical distinction between these three ideal types, I present a schematic breakdown\(^{11}\) of indicators according to various aspects of governance, spanning from general procedural arrangements, financial governance on to personnel and substantial autonomy (see Behrdahl 1990).

**Illustration 2 - General higher education arrangements**

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<th>Market Model</th>
<th>Academic Self-governance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Core organizational unit</td>
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<td>University management</td>
<td>Professorial chairs</td>
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<td>Organizational structure</td>
<td>State agency</td>
<td>Enterprise</td>
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<td><strong>Patterns of intervention</strong></td>
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<td>Systems design</td>
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<td>Regulatory approach</td>
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<td>Competition, incentives</td>
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<td>Bureaucratic control</td>
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<td>State socio-economic</td>
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<td>Mediated through government</td>
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<td>Relatively weak</td>
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<td>Mode of quality evaluation</td>
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<td>Ex ante</td>
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<td>Ex State control</td>
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<td>Focus of quality evaluation</td>
<td>Meeting national objectives</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As for financial governance, we additionally distinguish between input and output-based systems and between centralized (regulated) and decentralized (market) systems (Jongbloed 2003: 123). Input-based systems primarily base the extent of funding on indicators such as staff and student numbers. Output-based systems pursue a more incentive-oriented approach by adjusting funding according to performance. In mixed systems, like Germany, a percentage of funds are distributed based on inputs and another part on outputs. As for the type of allocation, decentralized systems provide for a high degree of autonomy, enabling institutions to freely use lump-sum funds, while in centralized systems the state maintains control over earmarked funding (Jongbloed 2003: 122). In market models greater discretion over the strategic allocation of funds is vested at the university management level, which allocates funds on the basis of productive output. In academic self-control models the professoriate enjoys greater control over state and third-party resources, while market-based systems integrate entrepreneurial and investment culture into the procurement of funding (Clark 1998).

\(^{11}\) For reasons of space, it is not possible to offer detailed justification for each indicator.
Illustration 3: Higher Education Funding Mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial autonomy</th>
<th>State Model</th>
<th>Market Model</th>
<th>Academic Self-governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding base</td>
<td>State budget</td>
<td>Tuition/donations/research grants/state (diversified)</td>
<td>State budget / Third-party research grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretion over funds</td>
<td>State level</td>
<td>Management level</td>
<td>Faculty/chair level in cooperation with management level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding approach</td>
<td>Input based</td>
<td>Output based</td>
<td>Mixed-type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of allocation</td>
<td>Itemized / earmarked</td>
<td>Lump sum – performance</td>
<td>Mixed type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Incremental</td>
<td>Performance-based</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State steering</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic investments</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personnel autonomy** grasps the delegation of authority between the state and institutions with regard to pointing rectors, university leadership and academic staff and their means to participate in strategic decision-making process. In the communist phase, state control clearly defined bureaucratic and academic norms, as all academic and administrative positions were based on state appointment (Burnham 1999: 75) Academic models take a more collegial approach, which strongly involves academic staff in the recruitment of high and lower-level personnel (Herrschel 1999: 108), for whom tenure privileges are frequent. Market-oriented approaches see for a greater participation of administrative staff in the selection of academic and high-level personnel, but also greater autonomy on behalf university management to dismiss academics, primarily for reasons of unproductiveness.

Illustration 4: Personnel Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Autonomy</th>
<th>State Model</th>
<th>Market Model</th>
<th>Academic Self-governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of high-level academic staff</td>
<td>Appointed by state</td>
<td>Elected by faculty/management</td>
<td>Elected by faculty State review and approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of high-level administrative staff</td>
<td>Appointed by state</td>
<td>Elected by administrative officials</td>
<td>Elected by professoriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy to dismiss professors/lecturers</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure upon appointment / Early tenure</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of rectors / deans</td>
<td>Civil servants</td>
<td>Managing directors</td>
<td>Leading academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of academic staff in management</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Substantial autonomy** comprises the content of teaching and research as well as the size and accession conditions of the institution. Applied to modern terms, the central question is whether teaching and research should be focussed on what the academic faculty or state deems most important or what students and the market demand. Substantial autonomy also comprises structural issues, e.g. setting up new professorial chairs, size of the institution. According to Trow (1990), “aside from the freedom to teach and to learn, the (European) university rarely has much authority to manage its own size and shape, its entry or exit requirements, or its broad character and functions”. In other words, in corporatist self-governance and state-based models, the state functions as a “gatekeeper” (Herrschel 1999: 999) that sets the institutional framework conditions, while decisions over academic matters are entirely left up to the professorate with
little intervention by university management. Market-based institutions, on the other hand, determine their admission requirements and institutional parameters without state intervention.

**Illustration 5: Substantial autonomy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting academic profiles / curriculum design</th>
<th>State Model</th>
<th>Market Model</th>
<th>Academic self-governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting strategic goals</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>University management/Academe</td>
<td>Academe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining the research profile</td>
<td>State / academe</td>
<td>University management/Academe</td>
<td>Academe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting diploma structures</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting accession conditions</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>University management</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining the size of the institution</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>University management</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Independent variables and country selection

As outlined above, our exogenous forces of change are derived from institutional isomorphism, which is driven by institutional interlinkages. Two types of institutional interlinkages are distinguished. Firstly, we look at academic networks which existed in the pre-Bologna phrase, in which our selected countries were networked to a different degree with different actors at different institutional levels. Secondly, we address the how institutional interlinkages which have burgeoned in the Bologna Process have impacted the national policy making framework. To explain path-dependent developments, we look at endogous factors, i.e. the impact of pre-communist and communist legacies on the direction of policy drift. Sadlak (1995: 46) distinguishes in this regard between countries which followed the Humboldtian ideal of freedom of the search of knowledge through teaching and research (PL, ČSSR) and professorial/collegial control and those that leaned toward the French or Napoleonic concept of state control and coordination (Romania, Russia). Bulgaria was a historically volatile mixed-type with a slightly stronger Anglo-Saxon orientation in the early 20th century. Secondly, communist legacies comprise the patterns and degree of formal and informal autonomy granted to HE systems under the communist regime. Communism deeply impacted the institutional fabric – system of norms, values formal and informal rules (DeBoer / Goedegebuure 2003). While in some countries all traces of academic self-management were completely eradicated (e.g. RO), other countries were able to sustain a limited degree of autonomy over the design, structure and orientation of academic programs (e.g. PL) (Kaufman 1997; van Beek 1995). Moreover, the CEE countries differed with regard to the extent to which they were integrated into international (non-socialist) academic networks in the communist phase. Here the difference between PL and the CR is the most pronounced, as the Polish scientific community – unlike their Czech colleagues– enjoyed relative freedom to publish and attend conferences overseas.

Hence, we tap into Lijphart’s (1971) logic for comparative studies by focusing on “comparable” cases. These include those which are similar in a large number of important characteristics viewed as constants (post-communist transformation countries, new EU members), but differ with regard to the key variables under investigation (historical legacies, institutional interlinkages and networking).
Illustration 6: Selection of countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Czech Republic</th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>Romania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-communist pathway</strong></td>
<td>Humboldt model</td>
<td>Humboldt model</td>
<td>Mixed type</td>
<td>State authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communist pathway</strong></td>
<td>Relatively moderate state control</td>
<td>Relatively moderate state control</td>
<td>Far-reaching state control</td>
<td>Extreme state control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-1989 networking with (non-communist) countries</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Yes (after ca. 1965)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Results

This section presents the preliminary results in very condensed form. For reasons of space, only a brief overview can be given of the originally 30-page country reports. It draws on a series of 35 interviews conducted with diverse high-ranking CEE policy makers and HE experts as well as various legislative and policy documents. Shifts in governance patterns shall be traced on the basis of the three models of HE governance drawn up in the previous section in order to examine the extent and direction of convergence.

6.1 The Czech Republic

The post-1989 course of events in the CZ was swift and dramatic. Practically overnight, “democratic” governance with far-reaching autonomy was introduced to HE, as the academic community rapidly mobilized and consolidated to protect, isolate and distance itself from the state. Instead of initially seeking a more pragmatic relationship with the state, policy makers, i.e. academics themselves, placed faith in the self-healing capacity of HE institutions for re-organization and reform (Interview 24/9/06). Against this background, policy makers sought to reinstate the idea of the liberal Humboldtian university, bolstered by internal democratic structures and external buffer organizations. The efforts to establish “free” universities, much like free parliaments and courts (Scott 2006: 431) also allowed for the wide-spread participation of students in the transformation process and the representative bodies created in the aftermath (Interview 9/26/06-B; Pabian 2007).

The pre-war chair system was equally re-established (Interview 18/11/06). This quickly transformed the once hierarchical system into a highly fragmented one, in which autonomy over substantial and procedural affairs was fragmented down to the lowest level - the professorial chairs. The mass deregulation and abolishment of state power was reflected in the Higher Education Act of July 1, 1990, which essentially provided a legal basis for institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and self-management. Thus universities regained control over all aspects of substantial autonomy including not only teaching and research programs, but also student numbers, admission criteria, leadership positions and all internal structural decisions (Interviews 25/11/06; 19/11/06-A). With regard to personnel autonomy, the newly established system represented a rather extreme form of academic self-governance. High and low-level academic staff was elected solely by other high-ranking faculty staff, without state review. This equally pertains to the appointment of rectors, who generally were chosen by fellow high ranking academics and shared governance authority with other academic staff.

12 More thorough country-specific accounts will be rendered in the final project report (expected October 2007) and my dissertation (expected Spring 2008).
The extreme shift of authority towards the professorate was further bolstered by tenure privileges (Interview 19/11/06-A).

The HE Act contained several additional features significant for understanding the new governance system. Essentially, anything indicative of central control was banished (Cerych 2001). In fact De Boer/Goedegebuure (2003: 219) go as far as to speak of the “abolition of government”. Yet this diminishment of executive control also applied to the powers and authorities of rectors, whose autonomy was constricted by an array of buffer organizations established in early state of reform, which protected institutions’ intellectual independence and capacity for self-governance. The most prominent of these was and still is the Academic Senate, which is a “democratically elected” representative body consisting of elected academics and 30 to 50% students. For policy change, the Ministry also required the consensus of the Czech Rectors Conference and Council of Higher Education Institutions which only included academics, thus no external stakeholders.

To use the terminology of Neave/Van Vught (1991: 251-252), the state relinquished both product and process control in Czech HE. In fact, the only means for the state to shape the regulatory framework was by creating financial framework conditions. The Czech system indeed remained heavily subsidized by the state, which in turn allocated earmarked funds to institutions. Instead of opting for a market-oriented solution, which would hypothetically entail student tuition and contract-based cooperation between universities and the private sector, the Ministry continued to fund HE in full. Initially, the level of institutional funding remained incremental and dependent on the outcome of negotiations between HE institutions and the Ministry (Interview 18/11/2006). Since 1992, however, the autonomy of universities was enhanced with the switch to lump-sum funding (Pabian 2007; Jongbloed 2003: 128), although performance based criteria were not yet considered. Thus, with respect to funding, the Czech system initially remained in line with the Humboldt ideal type. This dependence on the state is reinforced by the lack of culture of “soliciting” private donations and sponsorship from the business community (see Hendrichová / Šebková 1995).

6.1.1 Endogenous vs. exogenous motivations for policy change

The international and European dimension also profoundly affected CZ higher education. However, these effects were primarily restricted to quantitative-structural aspects. In other words, the mode of governance has only been affected to a limited extent by the policy models conveyed through transnational policy networks. Instead, the Humboldt-oriented path initially selected after 1989 was reinforced by three primary

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13 The core task of the institution is to oversee academic self-management between academics and students. Rectors, who are direct representatives of the academic community, are elected by the academic senate, which in turn limits his/her executive steering capacity (Interview 18/9/06). However, one possible remaining fragment of state control is that rectors must be formally appointed by the President of the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, this marks a clear contrast to the previous system, in which rectors were political appointees, and increases pressure for the reconciliation of interests between various members of the academic community.

14 which was established out of the Club of Czech and Slovak Rectors and is formally the responsible party for international contacts (Hendrichová / Šebková 1995: 107)

15 According to the formula (number of students x cost of study)
motivations: the drive for democracy, the impact of pre-communist traditions, and indeed linkages with western countries, Germany and Austria in particular. Although they did not provide a sheer blueprint for reform, references to German and Austrian HE legislation added substantiation to the Czech model of academic self-governance and underlying legislation (Interview 19/11/06-B). Instead of aligning themselves with the trend towards “entrepreneurial universities” (Clark 1998; Sporn 2006), policy makers sought to concoct a novel system of quasi-parliamentary governance and checks-and-balances, clearly motivated by the oversensitivity of the academic community to any kind of external intervention (Hendrichová 1995: 65; Interview 24/9/06).

However, the Czech academic community did become involved in various pan-European and international undertakings to stimulate reform (Šťastná 2001: 478). Highly instructive for understanding the dynamics of Czech HE is its cooperation with the OECD, which drew up recommendations based on problematic aspects of the system that emerged after 1989. Such a development would bring Czech HE in line with current trends in the OECD area (OECD 1992: 139). Besides the expansion of Czech HE and the renewal and modernization of studies, the OECD proposed the establishment of an independent high-level group, i.e. an advisory think tank of institutions affected by HE, to assess HE challenges, with particular regard to competitiveness, technological progress, and the exigencies of transformation (OECD 1992; see Cerych 2002: 117). Moreover, the OECD called for more efficient internal HE structures and diversified funding, e.g. more strategic management in HE and a broader mix of public and private funding.

The expansion and diversification of Czech HE was indeed based on the transfer of foreign models into the Czech context, as a consequence institutional networking between Dutch and Czech specialists. Following up on the OECD recommendation, the Dutch HBO-Raad16 allocated funding for the creation of non-university professional HE (Výšší odborná škola), as existed in the Netherlands (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs) or Britain (Polytechnics) (Hendrichová et al. 1998). However, the OECD’s appeal for a greater component of strategic management was shrugged off by the academic lobby, who feared the imposition of anything evocative of a master plan by the state. A similar scenario also applies to the recommendation for more efficient internal structures, which would lead to greater accountability from university managers and greater efforts to procure non-state funding. Instead of devolving greater power to university management, Czech academics came to master the “art of freedom” and use autonomy to block reform efforts (Mateju 2004). In fact, changes were only implemented in those areas which did not alter the governance structures established in the early post-communist phase. Hence, the impact of interlinkages with the EU primarily remained restricted to system expansion and “capacity building”, i.e. the establishment of international relations departments and continuing education centers (Šťastná 2001: 476; Pabian 2007).

16 Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences
6.1.2 The Bologna phase
Is the Czech system of governance marked by the same degree of inertia in post-Bologna Phase? Firstly, the HE Act of 1998, was passed with the objective of establishing a more stable relationship between the state and university, by giving the state more leverage over “product control”. This entailed the creation of a more extensive system of state accreditation\textsuperscript{17} comprising all programs, not exclusively institutions (Interview 24/9/06). The Act also paved the path for the creation of private universities. More significant however, is the array of aspects that have not changed post-1999 – despite the more integrative and homogenous supranational framework. These include, in particular, the power of the professorate, the strong degree of collegial control, the almost exclusively academic representation in representative bodies and academic senates, as well as the lacking entrepreneurial character of university management structures.

Nevertheless, the Bologna Process does appear to have dragged the Czech system away from the most extreme from of academic self-rule. This is manifested, on the one hand, by the centralization tendency in HE governance due to the focus on implementation of the Bologna objectives (Pabian 2007). On the other hand, scattered political and academic actors have used Bologna as a discourse argument to bolster a stronger, but still comparatively moderate neo-liberal agenda. For example, amendments to the HE act triggered by a group of right-wing parliamentarians led to the implementation of the two-tier degree structure, but also stronger synergies between HE institution and knowledge-related enterprises as well as dual-funding (free and fee-based) and greater transparency in admissions (Matějů 2001; Pabian 2007). A stronger market orientation is evident with regard to the diversification of funding by means of strategic investments, contracts with private firms, etc. At the same time, the CR is clearly moving from input to output-based lump-sum funding, which has been inspired – to a large extent – by the British model (Interview 26/11/06-A).

Altogether, by adding multi-level reference points, the Bologna Process has indeed changed the politics of Czech HE, but only incrementally underlying policy and governance patterns (Pabian 2007). The fragmented and relatively isolated system of governance that emerged post-1989 appears to be slow in meeting needs for flexibility and societal accountability and demonstrates a relative lack of executive leadership and trans-faculty coordination. This can be explained, on the one hand, by the relatively inward-looking nature of the Czech academic community (Interview 19/9/06-A) – perhaps a late consequence of the closed nature of Czech HE in the communist phase. Nevertheless, the Bologna platform has provoked Czech academic policy makers to partake in “unconscious inspiration” by foreign trends (Interview 26/9/07-B), leading at least to a greater sense of problem pressure in the face of heightened competition and in various other instances to the sluggish introduction of market-oriented and managerial instruments. However, the high level of veto points in the system and lack of executive steering have clearly served to uphold the Humboldt-oriented chair

\textsuperscript{17} It must be noted that the Accreditation Committee exclusively consists of academics.
system, in which individual faculties and academics are devising their own individual strategies to adapt to globalization and Europeanization.

6.2 Bulgaria
The path which Bulgaria embarked upon after 1989 illustrates to a greater extent than its neighbours that the transition towards university autonomy can be a turbulent and rocky one. In the initial aftermath of the end of totalitarian rule, BG followed the same storyline as the CR with a swift move towards “academic oligarchy” (Interview 26/2/07-A). Unlike in the CR, no actual Higher Education Act was drawn up in the initial phase. Instead, BG policy-makers viewed it as more expedient to only legally codify the re-established academic autonomy, without a legal framework for overall system governance. Hence, instead of clear principles and legislation regulating the relationship between the state and HE providers, BG academics conceived the reintroduction of autonomy as a democratic political action to accelerate the erosion of the totalitarian system (Boayadjieva 2007: 112). Substantial matters such as study content and course programs were determined at the faculty level and via the academic senates, without government influence. At the level of personnel autonomy, we also find the main thrust of authority vested at the faculty level. As the head of newly established academic senates, the role of rectors and university management remained watered down as compared to more market-oriented systems.

This led to a situation of unfettered autonomy in which academics pursued a course of fragmented expansion. Individual faculties and units sought to achieve the status of HE institutions, which were able to collect student tuition fees. In doing so, not only did the number of universities increase from 5 to 40, but student numbers also increased uncontrollably, despite the lack of adequate facilities, materials, and qualified faculty (Interview 28/2/07). Instead of establishing effective systems of university management, academics utilized the liberal regulations to shield themselves from external control, often demonstrating rent-seeking behaviour in the procurement and management of tuition funds (Interview 1/3/07-B). Thus, instead of channelling academic processes towards greater accountability and productivity (Georgieva 2002: 28), BG universities pursued a strategy of unfettered system expansion with autonomy vested at the lowest level.

6.2.1 Endogenous vs. exogenous motivations for policy change
The devolution of power to the lowest level in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of communism can partially attributed to circumstances existing in the communist phase. The abolishment of state regulation and detachment from political control enabled individual units to operate on their own terms and hindered the creation of overarching policy. Hence, it was initially not the extreme state control of the totalitarian phase which continued to shape the initial post-communist path, rather the overspecialization. Upon evaluation of the evidence, the impact of the pre-communist phase was weaker than in the Czech Republic, as only one university existed in the pre-war phase, University of Sofia. Nevertheless, there are indications that policy makers did draw inspiration from pre-war constellations. In fact, Boiajdjeva (2007: 116-118) goes as far as to claim that isomorphic processes came to bear here, as academic policy makers strived to design
their institutions in line with the Sofia. In the post-communist phase, BG academic policy-makers frequently opted not to build on their own university profiles, but tended to adhere to the model regarded as most successful and desirable - the pre-war Sofia model. This was facilitated by the wide-spread view that the Sofia was modelled in its own right on (western) European traditions (Boayadjieva 2007: 117). Hence we find a junction here between the two theoretical strands guiding this analysis – historical institutionalism and institutional isomorphism.

With regard to transnational isomorphism, interlinkages with western Europe remained rather weak in the onset of transformation, as BG academic policy-makers remained rather inward-looking (Interview 27/2/07-A). However, as a consequence of the re-emergence of the state and re-centralization of Bulgarian higher education in the mid-1990s this changed incrementally. In contrast to their Czech counterparts, the BG academic community was not sufficiently able to insulate it from the state or effectively manage its far-reaching autonomy. With the passing of the Bulgarian HE Law of 1995, the pendulum thus shifted back to state control. This was manifested by Uniform State Requirements containing a registry of state authorized programmes and fields of study, on the basis of which the state regulated accession conditions and funding and ultimately regained control over system design. Suddenly, the state was able create a HE control cycle, in which funds were determined by the number of students and, the number of students determined by the state.

While the re-emergence of the state in the HE arena was initially motivated by its efforts to prevent the system from sliding into post-totalitarian disarray, the Ministry increasingly strived to draw up a coherent reform package to bring the system in line with modern European standards. Firstly, the re-centralization of Bulgarian HE education enabled the Ministry to seek tighter links to the international level to provide guidance to a more uniform reform strategy and redefine its role in setting HE policy. This was exemplified on the one hand by the World Bank’s involvement in Bulgarian education as well as the Ministry’s efforts to emulate the British model of accreditation (Interview 27/02/07-B). However, the “ideational inspiration” via transnational platforms by no means translated into the establishment of effectively functioning institutions. This is exemplified by the accreditation system, as disagreements persisted over program vs. institutional accreditation, but also the politics of stop-and-go, reform consensus and then disarray (Interview 1/3/2007-B). This was further complicated by frequently shifting governmental coalitions, as well as the competing objectives of the Ministry in attempting to relinquish control functions without the system sliding back into disorder. Moreover, academics, who widely perceived the state as intervening where it should not, e.g. number of students, structural issues, remained unreceptive to the state-managed strategies for adopting Bulgarian HE to contemporary societal and economic demands.

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18 See World Bank website
19 The top managers of agency believed program accreditation should prevail, while the state insisted on institutional accreditation. After foundation in 1995, operations did not begin until 1998 (Interview 27/2/07-B)
6.2.2 The Bologna context

Hence, at the onset of the Bologna Process, Bulgarian HE found itself in a struggle between state control, fragmented academic interests, but also increasingly imbedded in a web of transnational networks facilitating a rapprochement with international standards. The evidence gathered demonstrates that Bologna has not radically transformed Bulgarian HE policy. However, by introducing an overarching platform to draw inspiration from, it has added coherence and direction to policies initiated in the run-up to the Bologna, which were often interrupted and stalled by frequent changes in governing coalitions and weak administrative capacity at the state and university level.

The current status quo is best described as a mix-model of state authority and academic oligarchy, with market-based governance being the clear trend. There are manifestations of this paradigmatic shift at the state as well as university level. The Accreditation Agency, the main vehicle of networking with the EU, has visibly moved away from a state-serving approach to an output-oriented market approach system. Previously, focus was placed on whether legal regulations were properly implemented, whereas accreditation now aims to stimulate universities to establish their own output-oriented accreditation systems based, above all, on British practice, which are then subsequently evaluated by the agency (Interviews 27/2/07-B; 28/2/07; 3/1/07-B). The burgeoning network activity on the Bologna platform has also flanked reforms in the funding system. This includes not only the diversification of funding sources, but also the fact that since (2001-2002) universities receive money per capita, and no longer based on the number of professors. However, the amount of funding per university is still subject to a parliamentary decision, and then itemized and controlled by the ministry, who now partially pegs the actual allocation to the accreditation outcome (Interviews 27/2/07-B,C).

Drawing the English system, the state has also tried to lay out a non-binding blueprint for more effective university managerial structures and closer links to employers. Hence, as a likely side-effect of the Bologna Process and the development of the market itself in BG, there is a marked trend towards more managerialism and entrepreneurialism, not least with regard to the internal allocation of funding. As a result of the imitation of western European practice, both the State Accreditation Agency and Rectors’ Conference have also – with increasing success – organized collective meetings with business representatives to stimulate greater synergies between market and academic demands (Interviews 27/2/07-B,C; 1/3/07-A), now enabling employers to take greater influence on academic profiles. One obstacle to a more strategic entrepreneurial approach at the university level is not only the multitude of state rules and regulations, but also the limited four-year term for rectors, who have little incentive to perform well without the possibility of re-election.

Altogether however, the broader trend towards marketization can be regarded as a spin-off of both the Bologna Process as well as the late, yet swift development of the market itself. This shift towards product control and marketization has also prompted the state to partially give back universities the autonomy taken

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20 In 2007 on average 60% from state budget, 40% from other sources
away from them in 1995 in exchange for greater accountability (Interview 27/2/07-C), e.g. with regard to academic profiles, internal structures, admissions. Although the Bologna Process has not yet triggered profound reform at the core of the system, the burgeoning web of networks which it provides has enabled BG policy-makers to define more clearly their aims and expectations in line with readily available examples of western best practice (Interviews 1/3/07-A; 27/2/07-B).

6.3 Romania
To a greater extent than its counterparts, the Romanian case demonstrates how learning and flexible adaptation inspired by transnational interlinkages and networking can be used as an impulse for paradigmatic change and a successful reform course. In the pre-communist phase, RO was aligned more closely with the French model of state authority (Scott 2002: 140-141; Sadlak 1990: 7), even though the Humboldt model became more predominant between 1920 and 1950 (Interview 8/12/06-B). Nevertheless, RO was marked by the disproportionate role of the state in coordinating HE and the de-facto integration of HE into the state apparatus. During the communist phase, remaining traces of academic self-management and autonomy were abolished, while universities were transformed into labour-force breeding units in line with ideological norms (Mihailescu/Vlasceanu 76: 1994). However, as a consequence of Ceausescu’s “divorce” from Moscow in the late 1960s, a slight liberalization of the academic sphere took place and academic cooperation with the west developed rapidly, enabling academics to participate in international activities and technology transfer.21

Unlike BG and CZ, no extensive reforms aimed at uprooting the internal logic of the system were pursued immediately after 1989 (Nicolescu 2002: 92-93). Universities were granted de facto autonomy, yet only in a limited and inconsistent manner. For example, all matters of substantial autonomy, e.g. curricula, study courses, institutional parameters, remained the prerogative of the state. Hence, the ministry continued to establish goals, strategies and an overarching framework for curriculum (Interviews 7/12/06; 8/12/06-B,C). In view of the extremely weak tradition of academic self-management in Romanian HE, the state demonstrated great uncertainty and reluctance with regard to granting universities greater autonomy and control over funding and procedural matters. At the same time, the academic community – accustomed to acting with restraint vis-à-vis an omnipotent state – was unable to mobilize and push for more extensive self-management powers.

6.3.1 Pre-Bologna Reforms – Tapping into the European dimension
By the mid-1990s, public HE was still state-controlled, under-funded and fully dependent on state subsidies, while individual institutions functioned under the pressure of corruption, instead of societal accountability, competition and transparency (Marga 1998). It was at this point that drastic changes were triggered in RO as a result of domestic problem pressure, lesson-drawing from the European platform and ministerial activism. Subsequent to the reforms initiated in 1997 by Education Minister Andrei Marga, the state relinquished its

21 See Sadlak 1990 for a detailed analysis.
role as a system designer and sought inspiration from market-based systems with the aim of imposing more competitiveness and entrepreneurialism. The Ministry of Education was restructured according to management methods and reforms introduced to promote new teaching methods and performance-based criteria. Moreover, the reform package entailed a switch away from formula funding to global lump-sum funding. The ministry further encouraged HE institutions to attract additional funds from the private sector and introduce tuition fees (Interview 8/12/2007-C). The gathered evidence suggests that isomorphic effects already came to bear before the onset of the Bologna Process, as international trends were continually referred to during reform negotiations and RO academic policy-makers overtly feared looking like a HE laggard – in particular with the imminent prospect of intensified cooperation with the EU (Interviews 1/2/07; 7/12/06). While the introduction of moderate study tuition was inspired by American practice, the British model was most attractive to RO with regard to lump-sum funding and external procurement.

Yet historical legacies also continued to shape Romanian HE, some of which actually facilitated the drive to market-based governance. This is the case with the very tight collaboration between industries and HE. This is not only the consequence of the Ministry’s increased attempts to promote industry-university cooperation (e.g. through taxation incentives), but also a late consequence of Ceausescu’s attempt to turn universities into industrial breeding grounds to sustain his vision of an autarkic economy (Interviews 1/2/07; 8/2/07). Moreover, academics have also turned to the pre-communist phase, and in particular the increased Humboldt-orientation of the interwar period (see Sadlak 1990: 1), as inspiration for their attempts to strengthen their collective interests vis-à-vis the state. As a result, an “academic oligarchy” had indeed emerged and snowballed in 1990s (Interview 8/12/06-B), which resists notions of societal accountability and poses an obstacle to reforms aimed at the increased influence of external stakeholders and the abolition of professorial tenure privileges. Although the chair model has indeed returned to some RO universities, many universities have also been relatively successful in establishing effective management structures to counterbalance the burgeoning professorial lobby and provide strategic leadership in the midst of fragmented faculty interests. Interestingly, the strengthening of the management level is also the result of isomorphic processes, as RO universities have been keen to emulate the practice of the two institutions broadly regarded as most successful in procuring external funding, profiting from international networking, and with regard to research output – the Universities of Cluj-Napoca and Iași22 (Interview 7/12/06).

6.3.2 Bologna Reforms

While in BG the Bologna Process has been used to add direction to a turbulent and inconsistent reform course, Bologna has accelerated and reinforced the market-oriented trend in Romanian HE, having side-effects on a broad range of HE issues. Policy-makers tend to view the Bologna process in a broader context as a means of changing the functioning of the university and bringing RO university in line with the demands of globalization and the knowledge economy (Interview 8/12/06-C). At the same time, the reform course

22 The University of Iași procures 48 % of its funds from non-state sources (tuition, cooperation with private sector); The Romanian average is approx. 40 % (Interview 8/12/06-C).
consolidated under the banner of Bologna has been defined as a springboard to move RO closer to Europe, and – to some extent – lend legitimacy to its HE system, when scrutinized on the basis of common European benchmarks.

The pressure to join the EU – combined with the normative environment of Bologna – have thus prompted the Ministry and HE community to increasingly focus on institutional performance and output (Interview 8/12/06). This has also had structural implications as the Bologna Process is used as a premise for the consolidation and merger of universities for the sake of efficiency. Moreover, a new system of accreditation inspired by guidelines and templates conveyed through the Bologna Process has been established in 2006, although the level of external stakeholder participation remains uncertain (Interview 8/12/06-C). Like in BG, the Bologna Process has also served to strengthen the autonomy of RO universities with regard to substance, procedural matters and funding. In other words, the state has relinquished control over accession conditions, size, personnel affairs, and research profiles, which are now determined exclusively by university management in cooperation with individual faculties. At the institutional level, the rector’s position has been strengthened, allowing for the internal allocation of funds on a performance basis.

Altogether, the Bologna Process combined with the high degree of willingness to emulate western (Anglo-Saxon) practice has accelerated marketization trends in Romanian HE. If passed, current legislation prepared under the Bologna label would represent the most far-reaching expression of entrepreneurialism in the four examined countries. Besides seeking a balance between autonomy and accountability, the law prescribes cooperation between universities and the businesses. This is envisioned not only at the university level, but also by means of a National Strategic Council for HE – based on the Austrian Wissenschaftsrat – which would not only balance the relationship between the state and HE institutions, but enable the Ministry to nominate business representatives to exert leverage over HE Policy development (Interview 8/12/07-C).

6.4 Poland

Poland stands out as a country with highly erratic and regionally differentiated historical traditions. Originally in line with the Humboldt tradition of fully fledged academic governance (Scott 2002: 141), PL was quickly integrated into the Soviet sphere of influence in the after-war period and succumbed to the organizational constraints of the ideological hegemony of communism. During several phases of relative political and economic openness, however, Polish science and academics profited to a limited extent from the greater permeability of the system to external influences, as contacts with western science communities were partially tolerated (see van Beek 1995).

Post-communist developments in PL follow two different storylines. On the one hand, PL stands out as the country with the most developed private HE system in Europe, which to a great extent draws on and emulates western entrepreneurial models of funding and governance (Interview 17/11/06). This has prompted many observers to classify the entire Polish system as market-oriented (Neave 2003; Interview 8/12/06). The public university sector, on the other hand, has followed a similar storyline as the Czech
Republic. This was first manifested by a swift shift back to the chair system, the legal codification of extensive initial autonomy and decentralization. Hence, universities regained full procedural and substantial autonomy, while policy-makers sought to establish a system of internal collegial governance. This resulted in the re-establishment of Academic Senates consisting of a majority of academics, students, and administrative personnel. Despite the initially strong Humboldt orientation (see also Neave 2003), Polish academics did not go to the same extreme as their Czech counterparts to buffer off the academic community from the state. Firstly, the role of the Polish Rectors’ Conference – unlike its Czech counterpart – remains an advisory one without formal veto powers. Secondly, Polish rectors – despite being elected by the Senate-based College of Electors, enjoy a slighter degree of leverage over academic senates than in CZ, as they are responsible for employment and salary matters and formally may overrule the senate (DeBoer/Goedegebuure 2003: 224). Nevertheless, they remain formally responsible to the state and by no means are their powers as extensive as in private institutions. The initial Humboldt orientation was also displayed by the lack of external stakeholder participation in the Academic Senate, consisting exclusively of academics, students and administrative staff.

Yet despite the strong liberal approach with regard to autonomy and private providers, the state did not remain fully absent from Polish HE, as it continued to regulate employment conditions, pay scales, working hours, qualification requirements, tenure and retirement conditions (Duczmal 2006: 944), while also laying down the parameters for the funding system. The funding scheme for public universities in PL offers a mixed picture and – as will be briefly demonstrated – the lack of finance reform is somewhat baffling for adherents to isomorphism theory. In the pre-Bologna phase, public HE funding in PL was exclusively based on a formula consisting of the weighted number of students and teaching staff with scientific degrees. Hence, the algorithm was most input-oriented of the four examined countries (Jongbloed 2003: 132). Like in the CZ system, national legislation prohibited tuition fees. However, in the Polish case, this only applied to full-time students, as public institutions were able to charge tuition from non-traditional students, i.e. part-time and weekend students and those who do not pass entrance exams. This arrangement has compelled institutions to enroll as many part-time students as possible to increase revenues. Funding for full-time students, however, remains based on the previous years budgets and few attempts to procure external funding were undertaken in the early reform phase.

6.4.1 Endogenous and exogenous factors of change
The Polish system has continually found itself under tremendous problem pressure in the post-1989 phase, making the sheer replication of pre-communist institutions an unviable option. The drastic massification in terms of student numbers combined with persistent underfunding is perhaps unknown to any other western country. In concrete terms, the public and private student population has grown from about 400,000 students 1990 to about 1.7 million in 2001 (Kaiser/ Wach 2003), while the level of public funding stagnates at around
1 % of the GDP\textsuperscript{23}. This combination of unfettered massification and systematic underfunding has forced HE institutions to sacrifice quality, infrastructural needs, and created a system of pervasive uncertainty. Turning back to isomorphism theory, it is this very uncertainty – combined with the historically high degree of openness of PL academics to draw on foreign practice and the quick integration of PL into European academic networks – which create optimum conditions for the emulation of foreign practice deemed as successful.

Hence, to what extent has the ready availability of examples of best practice conveyed through tight transnational interlinkages impacted the development of Polish HE in the past 10 years? The evidence suggests that PL still finds itself lodged between market and academic oligarchy, and that the international dimension has moderately impacted the direction of change. With regard to HE supply and demand, PL stands out with its clear market-oriented stance, which has not only led to an explosion in private HE, but also tremendous diversity with regard to the offer of study courses. As concerns governance patterns in public institutions however, only a slow shift away from decentralized academic self-rule has taken place. Internal management structures remain bottom-heavy and non-managerial, in that university management does not operate on the basis of strategic goals and university-wide performance criteria (Interview 17/11/06; see also DeBoer/Goedegebuure 2003: 224).

Despite the very sluggish move away from the pre-war chair system (Interview 13/11/06-C), the reform course has not completely stalled and the European dimension has indeed substantially impacted the relationship between the state and public and private HE. Much like in RO, universities are being granted greater autonomy and flexibility in exchange for greater accountability. This is manifested not only by the introduction of student evaluations and national rankings, but by various significant institutional modifications. Firstly, the Bologna Process and the lack of transparency with regard to accountability procedures inspired the creation of the State Accreditation Commission in 2001, which evaluates the quality of study programs in both public and private providers and has returned authority to the state to close ineffective programs. In exchange, the latest amendments of 2005 have granted universities more extensive personnel autonomy, devolving appointment authority to university level and allowing greater freedom with regard to staffing issues (Duczmal 2006: 948). Moreover, the abolishment of habilitation degrees has also been inspired by British practice and current reforms in Germany (Interview 14/11/06), resulting in greater flexibility in staffing matters and a shift away from the chair system - unprecedented in the examined countries.

However, PL clearly lags behind its CEE counterparts with regard to effectively channeling performance-related criteria into the policy-making and funding scheme. This is manifested at two levels. Firstly, lump-sums received from the state are distributed evenly among individual faculties without regard to output. Secondly, institutions not only continue to receive insufficient governmental funding for operations, but also

\textsuperscript{23} Approx. 1 % of GDP (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2007)
are not rewarded for performance. Adherents to isomorphism theory will be surprised that PL policy makers have not tapped into readily available innovative funding solutions, despite the widespread consensus on the ineffectiveness of the system (Interview 17/11/06). This sub-optimal situation is also compounded by still underdeveloped cooperation between universities and businesses. However, this does not imply a complete lack of market-oriented ideology in Polish public HE. Unlike the Romanian case, in which competitive structures were imposed top-down by the Ministry, the Polish shift towards academic entrepreneurialism appears to be a more bottom-heavy process, as the external procurement of funds (e.g. via international organizations) is entirely dependent on the initiative of individual professors (Interviews 13/11/06-C; 17/11/06). The lack of an overarching reform strategy inspired by successful foreign practice can also be explained, above all, by the lack of ministerial activism, but also weak university management structures. Furthermore, the lack of a well-delineated funding policy and innovative strategy also lies in part in the bottom-up nature of the Bologna Process, which is driven by individual academics (Interview 13/11/06-C). Hence, the core side-effect of Bologna has merely been to balance academic self-rule with quality assurance, not the introduction of greater competitiveness to public institutions. As a result, the PL system currently finds itself in a relatively unfavourable position between academic oligarchy and market (Interviews 15/11/06; 14/11/06) without the executive guidance required to develop a coherent strategy to face competitive challenges.

7. Comparative conclusions
Altogether, the study has revealed a moderate to strong impact of both historical legacies as well as transnational isomorphic processes. The early post-communist phase was characterized by a swift shift back towards academic self-rule in PL, CZ, und BG, which to a considerable extent was motivated by the desire to replicate pre-war constellations, but also the academic community’s efforts to shield itself from the state. RO stands out as a notable exception, being the only country in which the communist legacy of vertical control continued to shape policy-making. BG on the other hand was the country which took the swiftest “detour” back to state control due to internal disarray and lack of transparency. Those countries, which shifted back into academic “oligarchy” in the mid-1990s, experienced only a slight shift back to state control.

Hence, as presented in Illustration 7, the early transformation phase was marked by convergence towards the Humboldt model of academic self-rule, which only came to bear to a lesser extent in RO in the mid-1990s when policy-makers began to draw on late pre-communist practice and distance themselves from the state. By this phase, all examined countries had however converged on a system of state funding and fragmentation of power to the professorial level. In terms of governance, the European dimension has had the most profound isomorphic impact in RO, triggering a rapid and consistent shift towards market-oriented governance after 1997. This paradigmatic change has also been accelerated by the emulation of practices of domestic universities regarded as successful in procuring external funding.

24 There is evidence that the Ministry of Regional Development is “outflanking” the Education Ministry in forging closer ties between regional businesses and public and private institutions (Interview 11/12/06). However, these are not yet facilitated by taxation incentives
BG, PL, and to a lesser extent the Czech Republic have demonstrated an incremental adoption of market-orient features, but are far from being fully fledged market-based HE systems. In other words, the Humboldt-based systems only demonstrate scattered examples of convergence to the market as of the mid-1990s (e.g. the introduction of lump-sum, output-based funding in CZ). The results reveal that for fully-fledged system convergence to take place, the ‘agents of transfer’ must be located at the central level (e.g. ministry, university management) and demonstrate a significant degree of executive leadership and capacity to create synergies between international dynamics and national reform. This requires entrepreneurial foresightedness within the ministry, combined with centralized and highly autonomous university management structures. This is only partially the case in collegial (Humboldt-based) systems, which prove to be resistant to change and slow in meeting needs for flexibility and responsiveness (see DeBoer/Goedegebuure 2003: 215) due to their fragmented nature.
The Bologna Process has visibly enhanced the emulation of western practice broadly regarded as successful and effective, but as the case of the PL funding system demonstrates, emulation is not an automatic reflex even under highly sub-optimal circumstances. The Bologna platform has not stimulated all-embracing convergence to the market, rather a convergent trend towards the market and a tendency to use a comparable array of market-based policy instruments, e.g. output-based funding, synergies with the private sector, comprehensive quality assurance. This trend is also bolstered by the increasing conviction that the systems created in the immediate aftermath of 1989 are no longer tenable to sustain the exigencies of globalization. Above all, however, convergence towards western practice has taken place with regard to the role of the ministry. Here the thrust of power has switched from control over substantial matters to evaluation and accreditation. In line with the western trend towards what Neave deemed as the “evaluative state” (1998), a visible shift from process to product control has taken place. Hence, decreasing centralism and increasing autonomy for universities has been pegged with greater responsibility with regard to productive output, with Romania the clear forerunner, followed by CZ and BG and with PL as a laggard in this regard.


