



CENTRE FOR  
EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

# European and Latin American universities: convergence of ideas and response to the global changes

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# The original research project at the University of Ljubljana

**Tracing out the ideations of higher education  
in the European political and policy arena...**

...and thereby opening an insight to the  
Europeanization of higher education through  
ideational perspective and eventually shedding  
light on the meaning that is attributed to  
higher education in modern Europe.



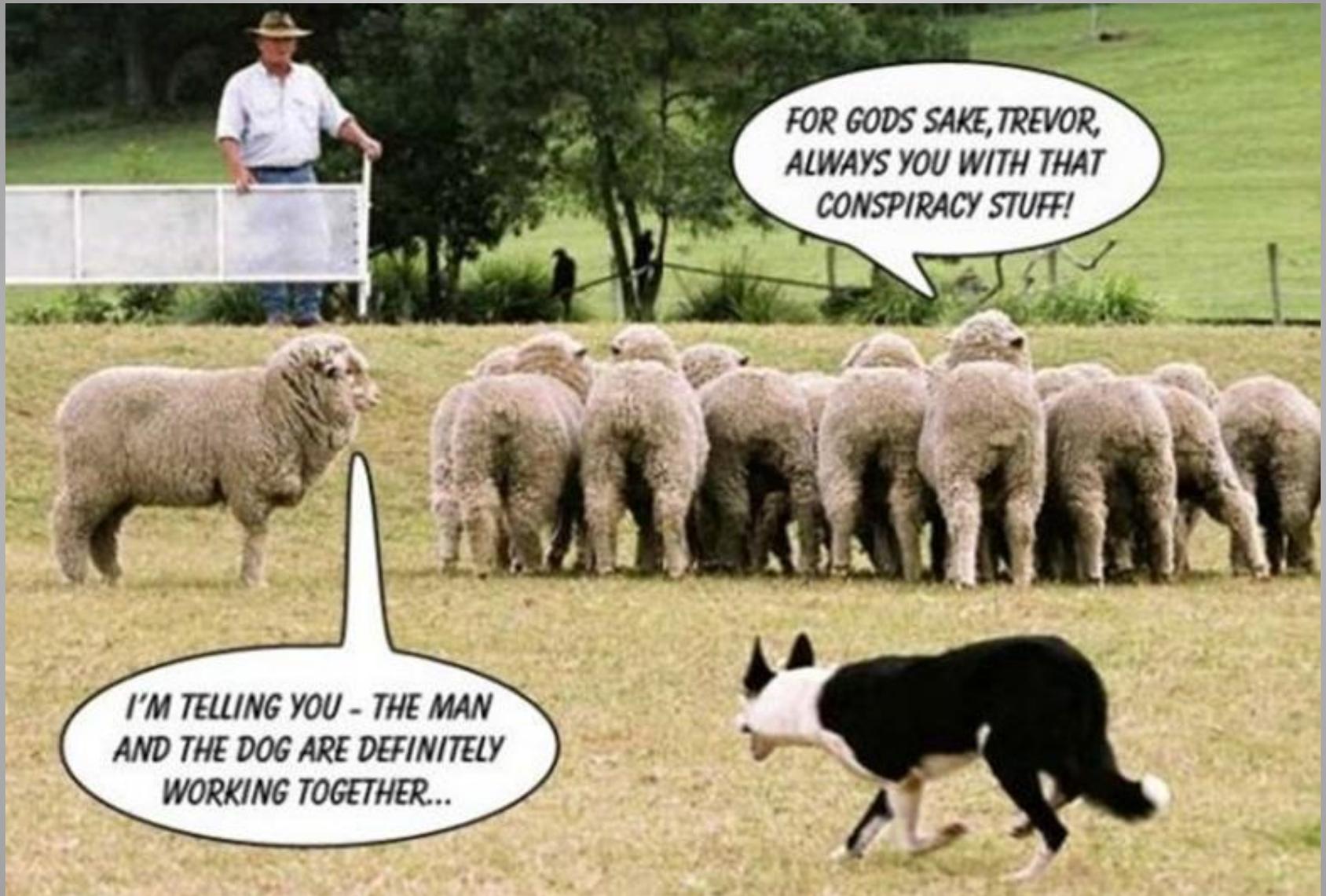
# Ideational analysis:

## DISCURSIVE INSTITUTIONALISM (Hay, Schmidt)

- Discourse=interactive process of conveying ideas
- Institutions = structures and constructs --> Actors are sentient and acting both (1) constrained by structures and as (2) independent agents
- Importance of **context** (not only **text**) & **action**
- **Cognitive** vs. **normative** content of ideas/discourse
- **Coordinative** vs. **communicative** forms of discourse
- Levels of ideas: **policy**, **programmatic**, **philosophical**

Introducing discourse and the logic of communication into institutional analysis helps to get the insight into what is going on beyond the static structures, how are they constructed and changed or maintained





# Historical materialism

- Historical situation is the main object of analyses – in the identified situation the significance of the events is to be interpreted and explained
- Identifying historical structures that serve to constitute the political economy, civilization and forms of consciousness
- **Historical structure =**

Ideas

Institutions

Material  
conditions



# Exploring **European** ideas on higher education

## **Field work and collected data**

- Main bologna documents (declarations, Communiqués)
- Side documents (seminar conclusions, joint documents..)
- Official correspondence
- Interviews with individuals involved in the process
- Side events dedicated to Europeanization of higher education (seminars, meetings)
- Actors (EU, CoE, Students, Universities, trade unions...)
- Identifying *key concepts* (public good, social dimension, competitiveness, mobility, employability...)
- Contingent events (Lisbon strategy, GATS negotiations...)



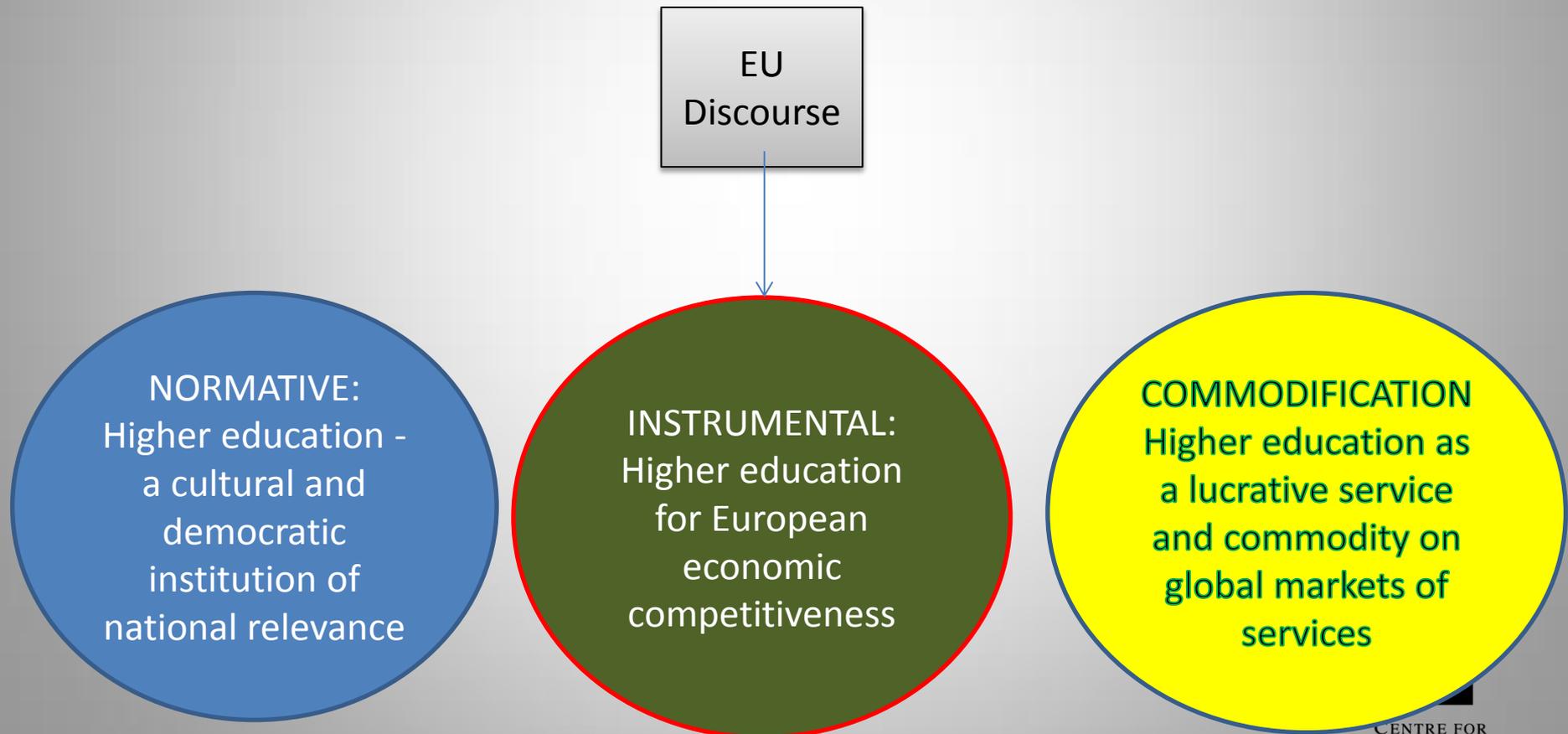
# What means Bologna Process in Europe

- Bologna **IS NOT** a monolith
- Bologna **IS** an arena where ideas meet, match or clash
- Bologna **IS** an attempt to find a regional solution to domestic problems in a complex policy field that has utterly changed
- Three ideational streams
- On two different discursive planes (levels)



# Conclusions from the research on European ideas on and meaning of higher education

3 streams of ideating higher education in European coordinative sphere of discourse and ideas



# Exploring **Latin American** ideas on higher education: Data collection & field work

- **Mass Higher education** – the research matter
- Comparing European and Latin American contexts
- **EUROPEAN IDEAS in LATIN AMERICA**
- Identifying endogenous (Latin American) trends, imaginaries, discourses, political projects...



# Exploring Latin American ideas on higher education

## Field work and collected data:

- **Participation in the Tuning Latin America project**
- Main international/regional political documents (declarations, action plans)
- Side documents (seminar conclusions, joint documents..)
- Interviews with individuals involved in the tuning project
- Conversations with actors in the tuning process
- EU documents related to cooperation with Latin America
- Newspaper articles and opinions
- Identifying *key concepts*
- **3 helpers/informants from:**
  - Quito, Ecuador; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Mendoza, Argentina**



# History of University in Latin America

## 1

- 
- **Colonial times:** *elite model*, subordination to the *Crown* and *Church*, *importing the culture and structure of society*
  - **19<sup>th</sup> century:** Decolonisation and *republican model* – professions and elite (exceptions, e.g. Brazil)
  - **Early 20<sup>th</sup> century:** **Cordoba reform (!)** – a socially embedded university & spearheading the social change

# History of the University in Latin America 2



➤ **2<sup>nd</sup> half of 20<sup>th</sup> century:** slow massification, resisting military juntas (1970s)



➤ **From cca 1980s to recently:** rise of private initiative, deregulation, substantial influence of international organisations (e.g. World Bank)



➤ **Today:** a diverse system of diverging institutions but yet converging ideas on reform



# Cordoba reform 1918 – breaking the oligarchy



- **Co-gobierno** – democratic structure of the university for democratisation of society
- **Extension** – working with civil society, trade unions and marginal social groups (through cultural diffusion & technical assistance)
- **Autonomy** of teaching, research & administration
- **Fluency of positions**: Public calls for teaching staff & limited mandate with possibility of extension on the basis of evaluation, examination & merits
- **Free education**, access, equality

# Contrasting views on EU HE projects in Latin America

- Offering the opportunity for rethinking higher education in Latin America
- Paving the ground for intensifying academic cooperation
- Facilitating regional integration
- Triggering/increasing reform dynamics
- Opening new markets for European Universities
- Expanding norms and values and enhancing a relationship of domination (hegemony)



# Regional political initiatives in Latin America

- A series of political meetings and documents with little follow-up or implementation activity
- Conferencia Regional de Educación Superior in América Latina y el Caribe (CRES-2008 Cartagena) in cooperation with IESLAC-UNESCO regional office
- An upgrade of the former regional cooperation in higher education



# The discourse in CRES 2008

## *Declaration & Action plan*

Samples from the prevailing discourse:

- **Inequality** as the biggest challenge of globalization (problem definition), referencing Cordoba
- “...Higher education is a strategic factor for the **sustainable development** and for promotion of **social inclusion** and **regional solidarity**, and for guaranteeing **equal opportunities**.”
- “To promote studies of our societies and cultures [...] responding to the challenges in the field of **human, economic, social and cultural rights, equality, distribution of wealth, multicultural integration**, as well as enriching our **cultural heritage**”

But also traces of economic discourse:

- “Developing of new curricula, education models and teaching strategies **considering new contexts, comprehensive education and relations of professionals with the labor market**”
- “...construct a national system of science, technology and innovation that facilitates the **cooperation between the government, universities and research centers and the productive sector**.”

But clear rejection of commercialization of higher education:

- “Rejecting the listing the **education as a commercial/tradable service** in the WTO agreements and **regulate the flow of foreign capital** into national higher education institutions”



# Academic Summit, Latin America & Caribbean – EU, EU-LAC

- From 1999 onwards
- Constructing the **common area** of higher education, science, technology and innovation between EU and LA
- A platform for launching TUNING in Latin America in the early 2000s (a request of ministers)



# Declaration and proposals to the heads of states and governments, Brussels 2015

Involving academics, professors, researchers, students, universities, research centers and other institutions that deal with higher education from LA & EU

- Referring to TUNING

## Values and keynote:

- Referring to common values as **democratization, distribution of knowledge, respect for cultural diversity**
- Referring to a “global governance based in **human rights, solidarity, peace, inclusion, social cohesion**”

## But counterbalanced with the economic discourse:

- “...relations between **higher education and productive sector** (*sector productivo*)...”
- “Facilitating the adaptation of relations between **labor market and educational supply**”
- “Encourage the **cooperation of higher education institutions with the society and the productive sector** (*sector productivo*), especially with SMEs...”



# Common to Latin America and Europe

(policy arena)

- The idea of *social change* and the related discourse of **global challenges**
- The **changing configuration of social forces** (global economic relations, emerging ideas and changing institutions)
- Increasing enrolments & **mass higher education**
- The ideas on **internationalization** of higher education and the central role of science and knowledge for the improvement of society (but different emphasis)
- The egalitarian values and **emancipatory purpose** of education
- The advance of commodification and the normative/value based resistance to the idea



# Divergence between Latin America & Europe (policy arena)

## LATIN AMERICA

- Addressing the issues of modern society in the context of the global challenges through HE
- Direct opposition to commercialization
- Strong egalitarian discourse
- **Democratic values** the university governance
- **Autonomy** as free from political & business interference
- Involvement with the underprivileged social groups
- Responding to the society by addressing **social inclusion, solidarity, equality, distribution of wealth**

## EUROPE

- A prevailing discourse on instrumentalisation of HE for economic purposes
- Indirect consideration of the trend of commercialization of HE
- Strong competitiveness/economic discourse
- Towards a competition oriented university structure (**management**)
- **Autonomy** as autonomy in managing funds and strategic decisions in the competitive setting
- Responding to the society by responding to the needs of the **skilled labor, applied research and innovation**



# Crucial difference for the relevance of TUNING

- ❑ A **bottom heavy system**, with a considerable share of initiative and autonomy of teaching/academic staff and students
- ❑ A weak regional integration (neither economic, nor political) – thus not favourable to top down initiatives like Bologna
- ❑ Democratic structures and co-governing as an obstacle to the reforms
- ❑ “**Critical reflection**” on ideas and politics of established public universities **vs.** “**pragmatic reform**” path of smaller and private universities



# Focusing TUNING Latin America

- TUNING carries an important political weight
- An attempt to see the broader picture in which TUNING is embedded – questioning the ideas that it brings along
- An opportunity to compare the ideas and meaning of higher education between two continents



# Responses of the interviewees

- Positive attitude
- Necessity for change
- Necessity to know and reflect the labour market
- Difference between private and public
- Reference to the values



# More to follow...

